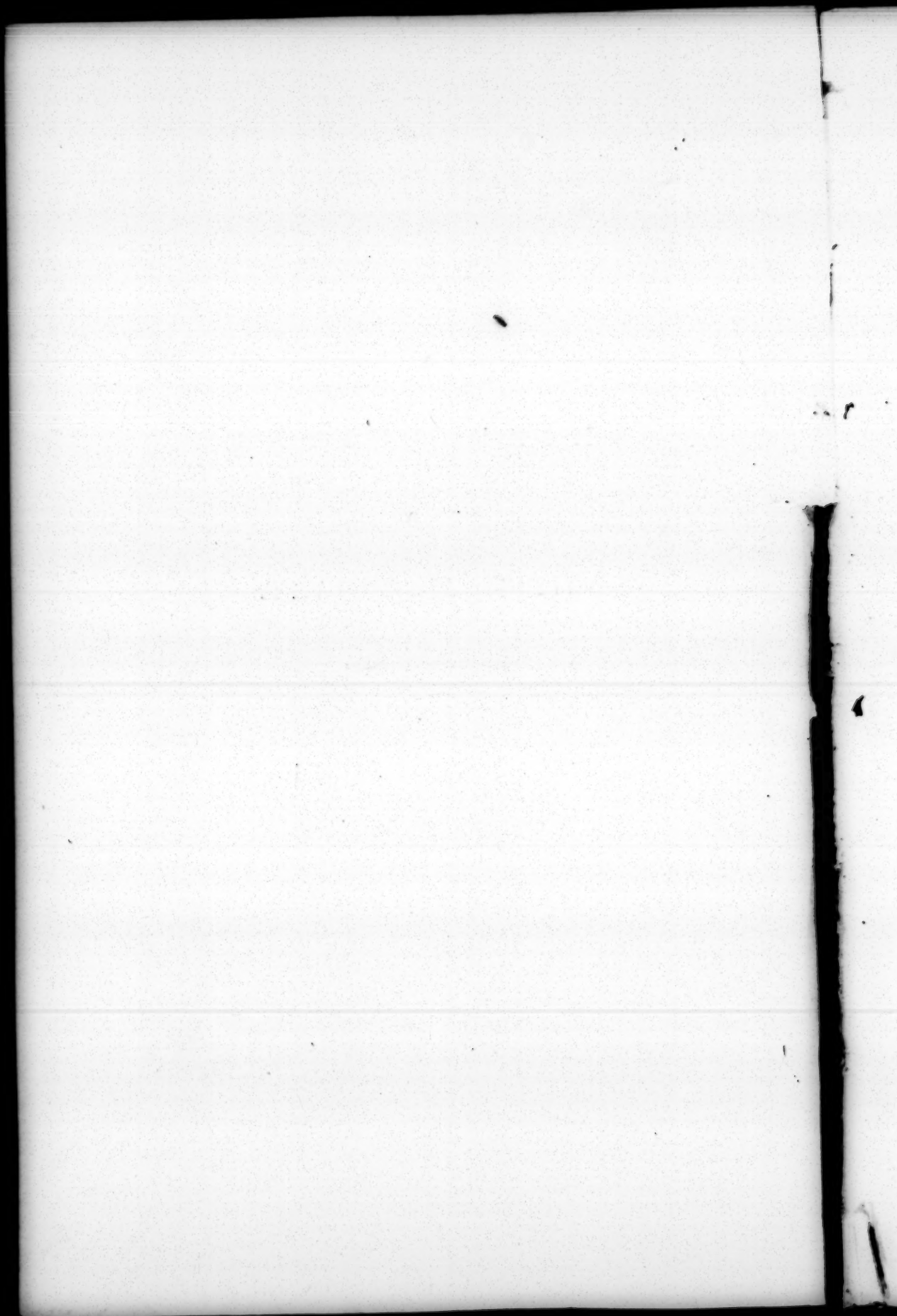


J. P. Cumming

A
THIRD LETTER
TO A
BRITISH MERCHANT.

[PRICE TWO SHILLINGS.]



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T H I R D L E T T E R

TO A

BRITISH MERCHANT:

CONTAINING

SOME GENERAL REMARKS ON THE LATE NEGOCIATION WITH
FRANCE, CONSIDERED IN RELATION TO ANCIENT AND
ESTABLISHED PRINCIPLES; TOGETHER WITH RE-
FLECTIONS ON THE STATE OF DOMESTIC
POLITICS, AND PARTICULARLY ON THE
MISCHIEVOUS TENDENCY OF THE
CONDUCT PURSUED BY
OPPOSITION.

By JOHN BOWLES, *Esq.*

L O N D O N :

PRINTED FOR T. N. LONGMAN, PATER-NOSTER-ROW,
AND RICHARD WHITE, NO. 173, PICCADILLY.

M.DCC.XCVII



L E T T E R III.

DEAR SIR,

THE late negotiation at Paris is an event which calls upon us, in the most emphatical manner, to pause and reflect. If properly improved, this event may be rendered productive of the most beneficial consequences. It will enable us to form a just judgment both of persons and things, which it is of the utmost importance we should estimate rightly. It is a touchstone to which we may with infinite advantage bring most of those topics, which, though they involve our dearest interests, have been disguised and perverted by malignant ingenuity ; and while it cannot fail, if rightly considered, to correct error, to remove doubt, to expose misrepresentation, and to place the truth in a clear and satisfactory point of view, it is admirably calculated to inspire energy, and to stimulate to such exertions as are most likely to produce a happy result.

In every complicated transaction, there must be some circumstances capable of different constructions. The recent embassy, though subject in various respects to this remark, in one of the most important points of view in which it can be considered,

dered, precludes the possibility of a doubt. I defy any honest man, after perusing the official and authentic papers published on the occasion, and relying only upon his own spontaneous and unbiassed judgment, without attending to the constructions of any party, to lay his hand on his heart and to declare, that he is not perfectly satisfied that the British Government has evinced on this occasion the most sincere—nay, the most ardent desire for Peace, and manifested, throughout the whole business, the utmost candour, moderation, and liberality ; while, on the other hand, the conduct of the usurping rulers of France has been characterised by duplicity, evasion, insolence, and perfidy ; and by an invincible repugnance to restore to mankind the blessings of repose. To take such an occasion to dispute the sincerity of the King's Ministers in their endeavours to put an end to the calamities of War, and to vindicate the conduct of our enemies, affords a proof of the desperation and profligacy of faction, unequalled in history, and, but for the fact, exceeding the utmost limits of credibility.

In saying thus much, I am far from being the eulogist of ministers. I do not wish to shut the door of inquiry upon their conduct. I do not mean to insinuate that they are not on this, as on all other great occasions, upon their defence, or that they have not much to explain and much to justify. In giving them full credit for sincerity in their endeavours

vours

vours to restore Peace, I am far from admitting that they have not shewn too great eagerness to obtain it. If there had been a virtuous, patriotic, and really enlightened Opposition in this Country, Administration, instead of having so easy a task as to refute a charge which no one really believes to have any weight, and which is sufficiently contradicted by facts, would have been called upon to show that they had not exposed the honour and safety of the nation, by offering to treat with a state founded upon such principles as form the basis of Republican France; and pursuing such views as that Country, from the beginning of the Revolution to this moment, has never lost sight of. Could they have justified themselves from such an imputation, by adverting to the change of circumstances which has taken place in France, they might have found a greater difficulty in proving that they had not compromised the dignity of the British Crown, by renewing so frequently, so importunately, and in so many shapes, their overtures for accommodation, when the enemy had given such unequivocal proofs, not only of a hostile, but of an insolent and implacable disposition. After all it would have devolved upon them to prove that, when they had, by patience, by perseverance and by moderation, surmounted all obstacles to negotiation, and had at length arrived at the point at which they might propose specific terms of Peace, they did not, in their offers, shew themselves disposed to make larger sacrifices than were either warranted, on the

one hand, by the relative situation of the Belligerent Powers, and by the just claims of this Country, or compatible, on the other, with the future security both of ourselves and of the rest of Europe, the only object for which we have carried on the War, and the indispensable condition, without which we should never think of Peace, since, without it, Peace would be alike ignominious and destructive.

But the honour and safety of the Nation, the dignity of the Crown, and the security of Europe, are of such light account with the Opposition, that not one inquiry has been suggested by that party, whether Ministers have sufficiently consulted these essential interests in their negociation with France. On the contrary, they have been made the objects of clamour and cavil for having consulted these interests so far, and for not having consented to sacrifice them entirely to the arrogance and immoderate ambition of the French rulers. Thus, while the measures of Government are thwarted by every obstacle, that the most active virulence of party can throw in their way, the public is deprived of the advantage which would attend a discussion of those measures on fair and proper grounds—a discussion which would bring them to the only test to which they ought to be brought, the real, substantial and permanent welfare of the Country.

On the great question whether it can be wise or
even

even safe to enter, on any terms, into relations of Peace and Amity with the French Republic, the greatest men in the kingdom are divided. On this subject my humble opinion has been urged with a frequency and an importunity, which could have been justified only by the immense consequences which the question involves, and by the duty which of course attaches upon every individual, to do his utmost that it may be fully investigated and rightly decided. Indeed, since the determination of the Executive Power, in unison with the sentiments both of Parliament and the public at large, that the form of Government in France (since Government has there assumed a form) should present no obstacle to our endeavours, by way of negociation, to put an end to the miseries of War, and since the attempts that have been made to give full effect to that determination, it might be ill-timed to renew those remonstrances, which should on no account have been omitted, while there was a chance of their producing the desired effect. At all events, and if it were yet time to rouse the nation to a sense of the danger inseparable from a state of Peace with the avowed and inveterate enemies of all regular Government, it would be presumption in me to think I could increase the light, which the subject has already received, and may be farther expected to receive, from that transcendent luminary, which now shines upon it with full and fervent ray. Since I last addressed you, the resplendent genius of Mr.

Burke

Burke has undertaken to display the ruin likely to follow "a treaty of Peace with the Regicide Directory of France." If that Gentleman (whose life God preserve) should be able at length to open the eyes of mankind upon the abyss that is just before them, he will have rendered a greater service to society than all the benefactors of whom the world can boast.

On another point of great, though of subordinate importance, it seems to me impossible for candid and impartial men to differ.—Supposing, for the sake of argument, that without exposing every thing we hold dear to destruction, we might venture on a treaty with France in its present state, no one I conceive will attempt to deny that we should lay it down as an invariable rule, never to consent to peace on such terms, as would leave France in possession of an ascendancy incompatible with the safety of this Country and of the rest of Europe. This principle is alike just and indispensable, for it is founded on the supreme law of self-preservation. It relieves the question of Peace and War of all controversial matter. By leading us to consider France as a Country and not as a Republic, it places the subject on grounds which have been long familiar to our minds and our feelings. It does, indeed, infinite injustice to the subject, by suppressing those grand and paramount considerations that ought to supercede all others; but much utility may be derived from

from its being considered even in this point of view—at least the application of the general principle would afford an infallible criterion, by which to judge of the late and of any future negotiation with France, since the principle itself must, on all hands, be allowed to contain the indispensable object of the War, and the *sine qua non* of Peace.

It cannot however be denied, that a strict adherence to this principle is abundantly more necessary in a treaty with the French Republic, than it would be in one with the French Monarchy. When the very existence of a Republic is attended with danger to other States, an additional necessity arises to prevent it from extending its power, and thereby from acquiring additional means of being hurtful. It surely cannot at this time of day, and after the bitter experience we have had, require any argument to prove, that the introduction of Republican forms of Government into France is replete with the greatest danger to every other Country in Europe. This would be the case even if the system which has been there adopted, could properly be termed a Republic, according to the ideas we have been accustomed to annex to that appellation. For, besides that this species of Government has ever shown itself extremely unfavourable to the peace and harmony of mankind, it has been invariably found to possess that quality in a greater degree in proportion to the extent and population of the Country

subject

subject to it*. But it is an insult to the other States, which have subsisted under such forms, to denominate France a Republic. She has, without any right, borrowed that denomination as a disguise for the Anarchy, which has usurped the place of her legitimate Government, and which, while it lasts, will never cease to aim at universal dominion, or in other words, at universal desolation. Having carried its ravages wherever it has extended its progress, it is at this moment endeavouring, not so much to conquer, as to disorganize Italy, or, (to adopt the new Gallic jargon) to revolutionize and republicanize it, in order to subject those fertile States to its own devastating authority. And, as every irregular and destructive principle, in order to preserve itself, is under the necessity of extending its influence, (like fire which can only be kept alive by the constant accession of fresh fuel) it is a matter of certainty, that so long as France continues in its present state, it will employ all its power and resources, as it has done throughout the revolution, in endeavouring to bring other nations into a like condition. I am aware that this view of the subject presents to the mind invincible reasons, to prove both the necessity and the justifiableness of directing

* I should extend my observations much farther on the mischievous tendency of Republican forms of Government, and on the peculiar malignity of the System established in France, had I not discussed that subject rather fully in another work, entitled "The Dangers of Premature Peace."

all our efforts to the destruction of a system which has already done so much mischief, and from which so much more mischief is to be apprehended. But it is not my purpose to enter into such considerations, nor to dissuade from the bold experiment of a treaty of Peace with the French Republic, but merely to show the necessity of not suffering that Republic, by the terms of the treaty, to aggrandize herself in such a manner as would enable her to resume, with increased advantage, the pursuit of those pernicious designs, which a regard for her own existence will induce her not to abandon.

To judge, therefore, of the late negotiation at Paris, according to the principle above laid down, is to make immense concessions to the advocates for Peace with Republican France. To apply the same rule to a negotiation with the French Monarchy, and the French Republic, must be allowed by those advocates to be an excess of candour*. But the question now before me will admit of such candour and such concessions. And I challenge the most strenuous declaimer against the War to come forward and maintain, that if, under similar circumstances in every other respect, we had been treating with a King of France, a Minister would not have

* The extreme candour of this mode of reasoning will appear if you reflect for a moment on the immense difference between a Peace, concluded on the same terms, with the French Republic and with the French Monarchy, and refer, for your criterion on the subject, to the great difference there would certainly be in the value of our Funds in each respective event.

deserved impeachment, who had offered to make Peace on terms less advantageous for ourselves and our Allies, than those contained in the memorial of Lord Malmesbury. I very much doubt whether the spirit of the Country would not have felt that the concessions contained in that memorial were too great, not only for a first offer, but even for a definitive treaty; as, besides the inestimable and dearly purchased colonial possessions of which they tendered the restitution, they would have left France, before too powerful, in possession of such valuable acquisitions as Avignon, Savoy and Nice. I very much doubt whether an outcry would not have been raised against the extent and liberality of those concessions when offered to a Monarch, by that very Party which seems disposed to think they did not contain a sufficient sacrifice to Republican Anarchy. But it is beyond all dispute, that the British Nation would have felt that the restitution by France of all the conquests, of which the cession was demanded, was indispensably necessary to maintain the Balance of Power, the independence and tranquillity of Europe, and the security, commerce and due weight of this Country against the Monarchy of France. It follows, by undeniable inference, that such a demand on the Republic was at least as necessary; unless it can be maintained that the same degree of power, and the same extent of territory, which, as a Monarchy, France should not on any account be suffered to retain, may be safely entrusted to her as a Republic; a proposition too monstrous to be seriously advanced even by the warmest

warmest admirer of modern French principles and systems.

Without entering particularly into a consideration of the specific terms proposed by Lord Malmesbury, I state it therefore as a general proposition, alike simple and incontrovertible, that in treating with France, whether as a Monarchy or a Republic, we could not have demanded less than we have done, without abandoning the indispensable interests of this Country, of its Allies, and of all Europe. This proposition does not need the support of temporary circumstances, but is established on the basis of long and unvaried experience, proving that the power and ambition of France render that Country much too formidable, to admit of our suffering it to obtain any considerable accession of territory. When Lewis the 14th took Cambray and St. Omers, the Commons of England thought it necessary to address the King, representing the dangers to which the Kingdom was exposed from the greatness of France, and praying that his Majesty, by such alliances as he should think fit, would rescue both his own dominions and the Netherlands, and thereby quiet the fears of his people.—See *Hume*, Charles II. Since that time the power of France has been much increased by the acquisition of strong fortresses and valuable provinces: and yet revolutionized, republicanized, jacobinized and diabolized as she now is—when by such changes she is rendered an infinitely more dangerous neighbour than she has ever been—and when we have, of

course, infinitely more reason than ever to resist her further aggrandizement, she insists on acquiring, in full Sovereignty, the Austrian Netherlands, that ancient object of French ambition, the acquisition of which our ancestors opposed with their blood, because they considered that it would be a deadly blow to the commerce, prosperity, and security of Great Britain *. Notwithstanding the invincible repugnance manifested by the Directorial Usurpers, to give any information respecting the terms on which they would deign to think of Peace, the negociation has, by the aid of dextrous management †, drawn from them an acknowledgment that

* The able author of an Historical Essay on the Ambition and Conquests of France, a work that every one should read with the utmost attention at this time, among other specimens of the wise jealousy with which our ancestors viewed the growing power of France, particularly on the side of the Netherlands, quotes the Earl of Stafford, who upon the arrival of the news that Gravelines was given up to the French, wrote thus: "For we are not out of as near a danger, that *a growing State doth get harbours right against us*"—and also Sir William Temple, who expressed a doubt "whether it were possible (on the conquest of Flanders by France, to defend ourselves in War, either by our own forces, or the alliances of our neighbours."

† Mr. Fox has contended that, in such a negociation, we should have laid aside all dexterity of diplomatic artifice---That is to say if, unfortunately, we happen to be engaged in a party with sharpers, we should make it a point to sacrifice those fair advantages of dexterity and finesse, which are consistent with the rules of fair play, and of which we should not scruple to avail ourselves with persons of unsuspected honour and unblemished reputation.

our demand of the restitution of the Austrian Netherlands was inadmissible. On this point therefore, at least, we are at issue. And if there were no other obstacle to Peace, it is now clearly and incontrovertibly established, that the pretensions of the Directory, in that respect, present an insuperable bar to the present attainment of that blessing; for it would be the grossest insult to British spirit and British wisdom to suppose for a moment that such pretensions would be submitted to—pretensions that would not only exact from us a violation of our faith to a firm and honourable Ally, and an absolute dereliction of the Political Balance, but also a permission to our inveterate Enemy to appropriate to himself a line of coast, from whence he could most easily annoy our shores, and to unite his own coast, so extended, to that of Holland, while the latter Country is completely under his controul, and rendered subservient to all his enterprizes of mischief and destruction.

Who is there of sufficient temerity to stand forward and assert, that we should in any case, and particularly under those circumstances of wealth, prosperity, and naval superiority, which distinguish our situation from that of France, submit to terms so pregnant with disgrace, and so nearly allied to ruin. Who will say that we should submit to such terms, even if they were not accompanied by the obnoxious and insolent claim, of annexing those extensive and important domains to the New Republic, by acts of her internal legislation, by mere indications

indications of her own arbitrary will, and without referring the point of acquisition to the result of discussion and treaty. If we had no compensations to offer, we should be entitled to demand from France the restitution of conquests, which she cannot retain without exposing, not merely the Balance of Power, but the whole system of Europe, to subversion. Every state has a right to demand whatever is necessary for its preservation, and no state is entitled to insist on what is incompatible with the security of others. Of the truth of this principle the Republican Minister, De la Croix, was so sensible, that in his conference with Lord Malmesbury he found it necessary to urge, as a ground of argument, that the acquisitions claimed by France would not render her formidable, nor endanger the tranquillity of Europe; and to support that construction, he was even led to make a declaration, which on every other occasion he would be as eager to disavow—that *the power of France was much reduced by her departure from the Revolutionary System, and that she could no longer raise the people in a mass, nor command every purse in the Nation: adding, that the French Republic, when at Peace, must necessarily become the most quiet and pacific Power in Europe.* I much question whether Lord Malmesbury, in the whole course of his life, ever found it so difficult to command his risible muscles, as when the French Minister presented to his Lordship's contemplation so very novel and extraordinary an association of ideas, as that of a quiet and pacific Power and the French Republic,

But

But while the principle, for the sake of which I have made this quotation, is thus recognized by such authority, it is not surely in the power of the insidious artifice of a French Negotiator to make us forget, that this lamb-like Republic, begotten upon treason by a cruel, confiscating and blood-thirsty revolution, and beginning its career by regicide, is the most savage, ferocious, and sanguinary monster, that ever infested the world. We cannot so easily be made to banish from our recollection, that it has accompanied its most atrocious cruelties with professions of meekness, gentleness, and humanity; that the most unbounded pretences to honour have gone hand in hand with its grossest perfidies; that its most distinguished assassin, Robespierre, laid claim to every virtue that can ornament human nature, and affected the utmost degree of urbanity, meekness, and feeling; that since it has professed to abandon its revolutionary system, which De la Croix represents as so essential to its energy, this peaceable Republic has brought both Germany and Italy to the very brink of destruction—and that we can have no security that it will not revert to that system, and to the influence of terror by which it was supported, should it find a necessity of so doing in order to prosecute its views of aggrandisement and molestation. We have had abundant proof that its rulers can never want pretexts to assume any degree of power, or to carry their tyranny to any extent, that may be necessary for their purposes, at home or abroad. In short, we cannot, by any colourings or disguises, be made to lose sight of the real nature of this revolutionary

volutionary Janus, which has been accustomed alternately to display two faces, perfectly contrasted to each other, but respectively suited to the circumstances of the moment—the one—hypocritical and treacherous, lighted up with insidious smiles, and uttering from its guileful mouth delusive professions of peace, fraternity, and universal good-will—the other—a Gorgon face of rage and vengeance; its eyes darting fury, its mouth besmeared with gore, its jaws ready distended for fresh victims, and every feature inspiring dread and horror.

But to return from this digression to the position which preceded it, and which I here repeat, namely, that if we had not a single conquest to offer in compensation for the restitutions we demand from France, we should, on principles of general security and self-preservation, be entitled to persist in that demand as the indispensable condition of Peace: nor should we on that account be chargeable with any departure from principles of moderation and justice. For while, on the one hand, the territories in question cannot remain in the possession of France, without giving her ascendancy fatal to the political equilibrium of Europe, and incompatible with its peace and safety, so, on the other, they are not at all essential to her own welfare and security. She was, in her former state, and without such possessions, the most powerful nation in Europe, and possessed of a weight in the general scale, that afforded a just ground of jealousy and apprehension to her neighbours. Her internal resources were

were not only fully adequate to her prosperity, but unrivalled by those of any other Country. And she has proved in the course of the present War, that, entrenched within her former boundaries, and guarded by her iron frontier—her triple line of fortresses—she was impregnable to the utmost efforts of the most formidable confederacy recorded in history. Of this she exhibited a memorable proof, when after the capture of Valenciennes, which is the principal of her outward line of fortresses, her then rulers, to prevent the people from being disheartened, announced by proclamation, that if the first line of fortresses should fall, France would be perfectly secured by the second. Such was the confidence which, in a moment of disaster, was placed in that frontier, which the folly, imprudence, and divisions of the other powers of Europe, suffered Lewis XIV. to give to France as an inexpugnable barrier. As, therefore, the conquests which she insists on retaining are not at all necessary to her for the sake of *defence*, she can want them only for the purpose of *offence*: and her present claims, by furnishing additional and indubitable evidence of her ambitious and destructive designs, afford the strongest possible reason that we should never consent to her acquisition of fresh means of molestation and annoyance.

But the demand made by his Majesty of a cession to the Emperor of all his dominions possessed by France, was not founded merely on the necessity of such cession with a view to the tranquillity and

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safety

safety of Europe, (though that alone would have been a sufficient ground for such a demand), but was accompanied with a liberal and generous offer of compensation. Our gracious Sovereign was enabled, by the glorious successes of his own arms, to offer compensations to France, for the restitutions which he felt himself obliged to demand of her; and although he might, in strict justice, have retained his acquisitions, as an indemnity for the immense expences of a War into which he was driven by the aggression of France, he generously tendered the whole of his conquests made on that Power, in order to satisfy the just demands of his Ally, and to preserve the political balance of Europe. If we reflect for a moment on the causes and origin of the War—on the unprovoked attack made by France—on the Decrees, by which she endeavoured to excite insurrection, and to introduce anarchy, in other states, and declared herself ready to give assistance to every people against their Government—when we remember that, in order to give effect to those Decrees, she began a War, of which she has openly declared the object to be the overthrow of our Government—it is impossible to deny that we should be justified in retaining our conquests, as an indemnity for the blood and treasure we have been compelled to expend, in order to preserve ourselves from designs so insolent and destructive. Could any thing then evince a more ardent desire for Peace, than an offer to restore what we are so well entitled to retain, in exchange for what we should be authorized to demand without any equivalent?

valent? But a cavil has been attempted to be raised, on the pretence, that the offer made to France did not, according to the profession which accompanied it, contain *proportionable* restitutions; and of course that it did not answer the description of a *compensation*. What has been already said would afford a sufficient answer to that cavil, even if the offers made by this Country were totally disproportionate to its demands; particularly as those offers comprized the whole of what had been conquered from France; but if the question be considered in relation to the real and permanent interests of France, the colonial conquests we proposed to cede are more than equivalent to the continental territories of which we demanded the restitution; for without the former she cannot hope to recruit her exhausted commerce, or to repair her shattered marine, which were both in a most flourishing state before she was in possession of the latter. And the value of the equivalent is still heightened by the consideration, that, considering the condition of her Navy, she has no means to regain her Colonies by force, while nothing is more probable, than that the Emperor should again wrest his conquered dominions from the grasp of the foe, and rescue his subjects from the grievous yoke which they are eager to throw off. If, indeed, instead of caring for the prosperity and happiness of their Country, the object of the French rulers be to give law to the world, to overturn all remaining establishments, civil and religious, and to extend the desolating reign of anarchy to the utmost boundaries of Europe,

rope, then the retention of their conquests is abundantly more important than the recovery of their Colonies; and the arrogance with which they spurn at the proffered exchange affords but too convincing a proof, in addition to the many before exhibited, that they still persist in those schemes of general subversion, which they have so often avowed as the object of the War, and the success of which is, indeed, necessary to the continuance of their own system.

But there is another concession implied in our offers, which ought to be considered as of very high value—the recognition of a Republic avowedly hostile to all regular Government—a Republic established on principles inimical to the present state of civil Society, and seeking, from the first moment of its existence, to accomplish the entire subversion of the subsisting order of things, and to substitute its own wild and destructive system of anarchy. The value of such a recognition must be proportionate to the risk by which it would be accompanied: but to estimate the extent of that risk would exceed the utmost bounds of calculation. Who can take upon himself to calculate the consequences of admitting into the Society of Europe, a Power which has renounced both religion and morals—which is at War with every ancient principle, and every established usage—which is not only founded on treason and regicide, but has erected a standard of universal insurrection and revolt—which renounces the authority of the law of nations, arrogates to itself a right to annul the most solemn treaties, and presumes to set up its own arbitra-

ry and capricious will as the only standard of public law, and as the sole arbiter of the fate of Empires? Who can suppose it possible that such a Power should coalesce with the other European Powers, or that such an immense mass of revolutionary leaven can be kneaded into the political and social system, without producing the highest degree of effervescence? It is not for the conventions of men to change the elementary nature of things. In spite of political arrangements it is absolutely certain, that the old and this new principle of Society can never accord. They are so totally opposite and incompatible, that they must continue at variance, until the one or the other shall be completely subdued. They can form no alliance---they can agree to no treaty---they can enter into no compromise. In vain should we hope, by negotiation and treaty, to lay the restless spirit of anarchy, disturbance and misrule. It is rather to be apprehended that by delivering that spirit from the circle within which it has been confined by the War, a general Peace would give a greater scope to its activity, and, by the aid of a more unrestrained intercourse, afford a more easy and extensive currency to its subtle and contagious influence. And should it prevail---but the supposition is too dreadful to be encountered: to glance, but for a moment, on the scenes which would then ensue, is enough to freeze the vital tide. Even France can furnish but a faint idea of the new æra which would succeed the universal dissolution of those ties, on which mankind have hitherto depended for the security of every thing valuable in human life.

life. Vast must be the difference between a Country and a World in anarchy. Conjecture itself here soon fails us ; but the obscurity which shrouds the future from our view, renders it but the more awful,

“ Through what variety of untried being,
Through what new scenes and changes must we pass !
The wide, the unbounded prospect lies before us,
But shadows, clouds and darkness rest upon it.”

I do not however mean to contend that we are entitled, in *Treaty*, to estimate our recognition of the French Republic by the extent of our own apprehension respecting the danger attending that recognition. Were we to judge by that rule, it would be impossible to expect an equivalent for such a concession. By consenting to treat with the Republic we have admitted, conditionally, and subject to the event of the negociation, that it may be recognized with safety, and we have waved, during the discussion, all objection to its existence. But, according to established principles, as well as to obvious reason, the recognition of a new Power with which we have never been otherwise than in a state of War, is a concession entitled to consideration in a treaty of Peace, and which should be compensated by a proportionate allowance. It is something brought to market, as much as a branch of trade---an Island---or any other territory ; and though we are precluded by the very act of negotiating from objecting to the principles on which it is founded, we have certainly a right to take into the account the degree of animosity

animosity it has manifested against all subsisting Governments, and the means it has taken to give effect to its hostile disposition. We cannot therefore, with justice to ourselves, forget the Decree of Fraternity, which invited the people of all Countries to rebel against their Sovereigns---We cannot forget the deliberate plan which followed that Decree, and which was formed into a methodical system for disorganizing all lawful Governments* ---We cannot forget the innumerable declarations made during the whole Revolution of irreconcilable enmity to all crowned heads, to every religious and social institution, and particularly to the Government and Constitution of this Country † ---Nor

* This plan was contained in the decree of the 15th December, 1792, in the preamble to which the Convention declare, that "their principles will not permit them to acknowledge any of the *constitutions* militating against the *Sovereignty of the people*." And in one of the articles of that decree the Convention also declare, that "they shall consider as enemies all people desirous of retaining their Princes or Privileged Casts."

† From the very numerous declarations of this kind I will only give two or three specimens. On one occasion the President of the Convention, in reply to an address from the Sections of Paris, declared "this is a War to last till death between Republicans and Kings." A resolution was actually passed by the Convention, "Never to make Peace with England, until she should have detached herself from her infernal Government." Camille des Moulins, one of the leaders of the Convention, in his history of the Brissotines, says, "To disorganize Europe, perhaps, to purge it of its Tyrants, by the eruption of the Volcanic principles of Liberty and Equality, such was the sublime vocation of the Convention." The famous, or rather infamous incendiary, Brissot, declared, "We must set fire to the four corners of Europe."

---Nor can we forget the annual solemnization of the murder of the French King, which infamous and impious ceremony is still observed, to prevent, as it were, other Monarchs from losing sight of the

rope." And again, "Miranda is the General for us, he understands the Revolutionary Power." And lastly, St. Just, in the month of May, 1794, made a report to the Committee of Public Safety, the object of which was to prove that "the purity of Republican principles would admit of no compact with the Cabinets of Ministers, or with the Senate of any modern Republic; that if French liberty should triumph, all the institutions which prevail in Europe would descend into the same tomb with Kings and Monarchy, and that the neutrality of those Powers which had not taken part with the Coalition, would but *delay their fall*." These are but a few of the modern Gallicisms which the extreme malignity they display to all established Governments has rendered proverbial. Nor should the many acts which correspond with such declarations be forgotten; among which may be particularly noticed---The conduct of the first Assembly in seriously receiving and sending to a Committee the detestable project of forming a Corps of Tyrannicides for the assassination of all Kings and Generals hostile to the Revolution.---The manner in which War was first declared against the Emperor, and afterwards against Great Britain and Holland: the first declaration containing the following article, unexampled in the history of civilized nations, to encourage treachery and desertion, "The Assembly adopt beforehand all the strangers, who, abjuring the cause of her enemies, shall range themselves under her standards, and will favour their establishment in France." The Declaration against Great Britain and Holland, besides being expressly pointed against his Majesty and the Stadtholder, in order to convey a Revolutionary distinction between Government and People, contained a like perfidious invitation to the Sailors employed by the former, to run away with their vessels

the fate which awaits them if the system of French liberty should become firmly established; that this shocking ceremony is attended with an oath of hatred to Royalty, and that, at its last celebration, this oath was, in effect, decreed to have a general allusion, as a Member of the Council of Ancients (Corbal), wishing to restrict his oath so as to confine the effect of it to France, was obliged by a decree to take it in the general form. These considerations, by pointing out the danger of recognizing the Republic, very much augment the value of that recognition. It follows, of course, that such a concession is entitled to great weight

sels to which they belonged, and bring them into French Ports. To all which it should be added, that the Jacobins set a price on the heads of most of the Sovereigns in Europe, and that the National Convention decreed, that no quarter should be given to British troops; in consequence of which several of our brave but unfortunate countrymen were cruelly massacred in cold blood. The recent conduct of these successful barbarians in Italy has not been less perfidious and cruel, and proves that neither the object nor the character of the French rulers (at least with regard to Foreign Powers) has undergone any alteration in consequence of their having professed to assume a semblance of moderation. I cannot conclude this note better than by quoting the description given by La Cretelle, jun. of the manner in which these scourges of the human race carry on their War: "By propagating Revolutions in foreign Countries, we perpetuate the War; we render it every day more horrid and atrocious; it is no longer one of those Wars, the horrors of which can be softened by that Law of Nations, which civilized Europe has adopted. It is a Civil War, it is a Religious War, that we carry into all Countries."

in the scale of compensation, and that it must add greatly to the value of the terms offered by us.

In judging of the fairness as well as the expediency of our proposals, it would be just also to take into the account the instability of the Power on which we must depend for the performance of the conditions of Peace, whatever they might be. A Power (to say nothing of its characteristic perfidy) so precarious, that he would be a bold speculator who should give one year's purchase for the fee simple of its authority. If Peace were made even on the terms we propose, not only the chance, but the probability, would be great, that in a much less space of time than that above mentioned, some new faction would obtain the ascendancy by a new Revolution, and having, according to custom, made its predecessors expiate their crimes on the scaffold (as far as such crimes can be expiated by *human* punishment) would again rush forth upon the Netherlands, (unguarded by the dismantling folly of Joseph II.) and begin a new War with the immense advantage of having the West India Islands in its possession. Vain would it be to calculate on the duration of Peace, from one moment to another, while France is in a state which tends as invariably to War, as the needle points to the Pole. This topic would be an inexhaustible source of observation.

observation, but I restrain myself from pursuing it. I notice it only to point out the necessity it suggests of preventing France from acquiring, by aggrandizement, the means of renewing the attack with advantage.

Neither can we, in forming our opinion either of the general expediency of a pacification with the French Republic, or of the prudential propriety of the terms proposed by us, lose sight of the conduct of that Republic to other Powers with which it has formed treaties of Peace. The first of those Powers, the Grand Duke of Tuscany, has fully experienced the value of French republican faith, and the sweets of French republican amity. Without the smallest pretext of any offence on his part, this Peacemaking Republic, after invading his territory, seizing the Town and Port of Leghorn, placing a garrison there, plundering it of the goods of his best customers, and debarring him of his trade with the English, now demands of him an immense sum of money, under the insolent pretence of defraying the charges of these acts of violence, injustice, and rapacity.—Spain, another of those Powers, has been obliged, exhausted as she was, in order to preserve the amity of her new Friend, to engage in a War, with Great Britain, which seems likely to cost her dear. The King of Prussia has also had abundant reason to complain of Gallic friendship, which, besides infringing the line of demarcation mutually

agreed on, has cut down his woods and plundered his subjects by heavy contributions, in those territories belonging to him on this side the Rhine, which he had consented, by treaty, that France should occupy for military purposes only. America can further bear testimony, that the most cordial and uninterrupted friendship with the French Republic can procure no better treatment, than a treaty of Peace. America, without whose aid France must have wanted the supplies necessary for the War, and, indeed, have been actually starved, has experienced in return nothing but ingratitude, perfidy, insolence, and injustice, (of the particulars of which you are much better apprized than I can be) and it is not unlikely that, solicitous as she has shown herself for Peace, she will be driven into a War, because she does not choose, like Spain, to surrender herself entirely to the influence of French fraternity. How exactly has the conduct of France verified the two famous declarations of Brissot; the first, when in the name of the Committee of which he was President, he said, respecting the treaties with Geneva, "Treaties are useless and cannot bind States, which ought only to be united by principles"—the other, which I have already quoted, but which should never be forgotten, that "the purity of republican principles would admit of no compact with the Cabinets of Ministers, or with the Senate of any modern Republic."

I trust

I trust that abundantly more than enough has been said to shew that it may, at least, be assumed as an incontrovertible truth, that this Country has gone the utmost length it could go, consistently with the national honour and safety, in its endeavours to bring about a general pacification. Whether we have not gone further, in pursuit of that object, than was warranted either by dignity or prudence, is, indeed, a point which will admit of considerable doubt. I am persuaded that there is not one member of Opposition, in either House of Parliament, who will venture to assert, that we should not rather rely on the spirit and resources of the Country, for a vigorous prosecution of the War, than consent, under similar circumstances (as far as circumstances could be similar), to allow the French Monarchy better terms of Peace, than those we have offered to the French Republic: I challenge the Noblemen and Gentlemen I have alluded to, (for strange as it may appear there are *Noblemen*—there are British Peers—who oppose the Government of their Country in its struggle with Anarchy) to meet the question on this ground. I defy them to get rid of the dilemma which arises out of their mode of reasoning, that we should either sacrifice the Balance of Europe to the House of Bourbon, or repose greater confidence in a Republic, which aims not merely at the aggrandizement of France, but at the total subversion of all regular Government, and the very existence of which is attended with

with the utmost danger to civil society. I challenge them, in short, to quit their insinuations, their subtleties and evasions, and in a direct and manly manner to declare, whether, to obtain Peace from the Republic, they would, if in Office, cede those points, which they seem to condemn Ministers for having persisted in too obstinately; whether they would consent that France shall retain the Austrian Netherlands, which, in their fondness for French phraseology, they invariably call Belgium; and whether they would, as Ministers of the British Crown, ratify her exorbitant pretensions of extending her Empire to the Rhine and the Alps. The only doubt that arises upon the subject, is whether the Republic should be suffered to retain any of its conquests—whether Peace, valuable and desirable as it is, would not be purchased too dearly if it were to leave such a Republic in a state of aggrandizement by the acquisition of Savoy, Nice, and Avignon. Besides the accession of strength, and the means of future molestation, which France would derive from the acquisition of these territories, particularly of the former, which would secure to her the possession of the key to Italy, it should be remembered that they were the first fruits of a Revolution which seeks to extend its influence throughout the world, and which has been holden up as an example to other States; and it is of the utmost importance that it should not be recommended to mankind by adding in any degree to the strength and resources of

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France,

France, but that the War, which it has occasioned, should terminate without any acquisitions of territory or influence; and that it should leave no other impressions on the minds of men than those of the misery, crimes, and devastation which it has produced.

Any one not understanding the domestic politics of this Country would have expected, that in the Parliamentary discussion, which the late Negotiation underwent, Ministers would have been called upon to justify the extent of their concessions—to show that the terms, on which they offered Peace to the Enemy, were consistent with the honour and dignity of the Crown, and the security and welfare of the Country—with the Balance of Power—and with the future quiet, repose, and independence of the rest of Europe. Judge then what must have been his surprize on finding that no such grounds were once taken by the Party, which is incessantly employed in thwarting and embarrassing the Executive Government, but that the Ministers were let off so easily, as to be required merely to justify their not having made more advances and greater concessions, to induce the Enemy to listen to our proposals of pacification—that they were entirely unmolested in the part where they were most feeble, and attacked on the side where they were not only strong but impregnable; so that they obtained the most complete triumph imaginable, and find even a larger majority of the nation in their favour, than that, by
which

which their conduct was approved in Parliament. What would the imaginary person I have presented to your notice conclude, but that Opposition was a mere farce, that it was in confederacy with Ministers to deceive the Nation—that the contest between the two parties was nothing but a juggle, and that, under an appearance of hostility, these parties were in secret the best friends possible. No such thing. It is absolutely certain that the Opposition are implacable enemies to Ministers, and that it was with a view to embarrass, discredit, and ultimately to displace them, that on this occasion (as on many others) that Party pleaded the cause of France, and exposed itself; by the grossest sophistry, and by the topics and arguments to which it resorted; to the scorn and detestation of every one, who gives scope to the feelings of an Englishman.

How is this enigma to be solved? Its solution is easy, but of great importance to be generally understood. It is well known to be the constant endeavour of the Opposition to render Ministers unpopular. This object they pursue with peculiar advantage, and with increased assiduity, in time of War: for such a time necessarily brings with it much food for discontent, which they never fail to increase by all the means in their power. And however just a War was in its origin, however unavoidable it is in its continuance, yet as it is an evil, and an evil too, which being most severely felt, fours the minds of men, this Party are incessantly ascribing

ascribing both its existence and duration to the fault of Government, and they find but too little difficulty in obtaining credit to such statements. Instead of reasoning from facts which, at the moment they occurred, were attended with the most general and absolute conviction, that the War could not be avoided by any means which a wise, great, and spirited Nation could employ, they are perpetually arguing from loose and unfounded conjectures, that if such a step had been taken, or such a measure adopted, the calamity had been avoided. It generally happens, indeed, that every sin of omission thus charged upon Ministers is referred to some proposal which has been actually brought forward by their opponents, partly for the purpose of embarrassing Government at the time, and partly with the more distant view of making the rejection of such proposal a subject of reproach, when the distress and apprehension, arising from continued hostility, should dispose the Nation to wish that almost any thing had been attempted, to prevent the existence of the misfortune. And although at the time when the proposal was made, which was the time most favourable to its being considered in relation to all its concomitant circumstances, it was fully canvassed, and determined, upon mature deliberation, to be disgraceful and impolitic, and calculated rather to wound the honour and expose the safety of the Country, than to avert the calamity of War, yet, when the general recollection of circumstances is weakened by time—when the argu-

ments urged in the discussion are almost forgotten—and when the impressions arising from both have given way to those disagreeable impressions, which four or five years of War cannot fail to excite (particularly if there be no immediate prospect of its termination) then it is that the public are daily reminded that such a motion was brought forward by Mr. Fox, and such a one by Mr. Grey; and without the least reference to the solid and unanswered objections with which those motions were encountered, it is boldly taken for granted, that if they had been acceded to, the Nation would not only have continued to enjoy uninterrupted tranquillity, but have been the arbiter of the fate of Europe*.

The recapitulation of these motions and proposals is invariably accompanied by a reference to some predictions, with which, in the spirit of political prophecy, it was thought proper to anticipate the disasters, inseparable from a continuance of the War, in order to assume credit for having sounded such "*solemn warnings*†;" and Ministers are charged with the blood and treasure, which it was foretold would be expended by the prolongation of a contest, that they had it not in their power either to prevent, or

* Since the above was written, Mr. Erskine has made just such a recapitulation as I here describe, which he thinks proper to stile "A Short Review of the Proceedings in Parliament." See Mr. Erskine's View, &c.

† See Mr. Erskine's View.

to terminate. And sometimes this prophetic spirit soars a bolder flight, and ventures to predict disasters, not quite so certain indeed, but not, however, quite improbable; such as the defection of Allies, the dissolution of a confederacy*, and the difficulty of obtaining Peace from a haughty and successful foe. But the risk attending such predictions, particularly if the point of reputation be taken into the account, is very inferior to the value of the triumph to which they are expected to give occasion; and they are almost certain to be verified if the War should prove unsuccessful; an event which the assiduous labours of Opposition are materially calculated to promote. For unfortunately these prophets possess, in too great a degree, the means of producing the accomplishment of their own prophecies.

Uncandid, illiberal, and unreasonable as this conduct is, it does not fail to produce, in a certain degree, its desired effect. By dint of repetition the most unwarrantable assertions at length gain credit. But Mankind listen with avidity to *those* assertions, which, founded only on conjecture, lead to that retrospective speculation, in which the mind, particularly in a state of adversity, is ever prone to indulge. Besides, in this mode of accusation the charge is general, and lies in a very narrow compass, and, instead of wanting the aid of investigation, it is best supported by a suppression of all evidence; of

* See Mr. Erskine's View.

course it may be easily advanced, on every occasion ; but the refutation comprizes an extensive survey of occurrences and circumstances, which it is impossible to keep perpetually before the eye of the public, and which, indeed, it would be tiresome frequently to repeat. Neither is it possible for Ministers to be always explaining and defending their *past* conduct. The duties of the moment are quite sufficient to engage their attention. But instead of being suffered to devote themselves, as they ought, to those duties, they are incessantly called upon for a defence of their whole administration, every part of which is ransacked every moment to furnish matter of accusation against them ; and they are required to be constantly travelling back the ground which has been frequently trodden, when they want all their attention and circumspection to advance securely in the arduous and dangerous road which is before them, and to surmount, not only the many *unavoidable* difficulties with which their way is beset, but also the numberless obstacles, with which their insidious opponents endeavour to obstruct their progress.

I would appeal to the candour of every person who is not absolutely enslaved to party-influence, whether it is possible for Ministers, while hampered and obstructed in such a manner, to act with that decision and energy which the crisis so urgently demands. Their powers of utility are so much lessened by these obstructions, that nothing can be
more

more unjust than to impute to them, under such circumstances, the failure or miscarriage of their measures; but for such an imputation to come from their opponents, is the *ne plus ultra* both of injustice and illiberality. I do not wish, like the Opposition, to reason from conjecture, but it is impossible to entertain a doubt, that if *that* party, without discontinuing their vigilance on the conduct of the Executive Power, had acted as an Opposition ought to do; if, instead of cavilling at and thwarting every measure that has been proposed, they had been employed in urging Ministers to vigour and exertion in the contest—in stimulating them to vigilance, energy, and promptitude—in exposing the slightest symptom of dilatoriness, pusillanimity, torpor, or supineness; and in calling for a spirited, though judicious, application of the strength and resources of the Country—it is impossible, I say, to doubt that our situation would have been, at the worst, much less embarrassing than we find it at this moment. But such a conduct would have had a tendency to crown the measures of Government with success, and of course to give Administration a firmer tenure in office, which would have been diametrically opposite to the selfish policy of Opposition, who think that nothing ought to succeed but under their auspices. Unfortunately the poor Country is the sufferer, and may be the victim of that policy.

There is one statement on this subject which prevails

prevails among men who affect to be impartial, that is, to side with neither party; but which is so extremely unfair, that it deserves to be exposed. The contention between Ministry and Opposition is often represented merely as an interested struggle between two parties, one of which seeks to retain, and the other to acquire, the sweets of office; and they are both regarded with equal favour, or rather with equal disfavour, by persons of the above description. This, however, is by no means a fair view of the case: Ministers are placed in high, official and responsible situations which the public service requires to be occupied, and a weighty and solemn duty attaches upon them to stand firmly at their stations, and manfully to resist every attack, while they discharge the trust reposed in them; nor, if they be attached to office, can they better secure their continuance in it, than by discharging that trust with fidelity; and thus their interest and their duty are perfectly coincident. But what duty devolves on any set of men to force themselves into office by an indiscriminate opposition to the measures of Government? Such an attempt seems to me repugnant to all ideas of *duty*, however conformable it may be to views of *interest* and *ambition*. How any man can reconcile it to his conscience to be indifferent to such a contest, or to refrain from giving his support to those, who are attacked in the important posts which, for the sake of the general security, they are bound to defend, I am totally at a loss to conceive.

You

You have doubtless observed, that the most virulent abuse of his Majesty's Ministers is always accompanied with expressions of unbounded respect and devoted attachment to his *person*. But can such professions be supposed to counterbalance either the malignity or the mischief of a systematic opposition to his *Government*? If an individual, or a set of individuals, were to seek every opportunity to insult your clerks—to vilify your agents, and all in whom you repose confidence—to depreciate your paper—to undermine your credit, and to represent all the transactions of your house as founded in fraud and injustice—you would, I conceive, feel but little obligation for any professions of regard for your person, with which these irreparable injuries might be qualified.

Nothing that I have said can surely be construed into a wish, that Ministers should be freed from that responsibility which the Constitution has wisely annexed to their situation. God forbid! that they should not be liable to be called to a strict and solemn account for the whole of their conduct. But the incessant cavils and abuse with which they are attacked, and the embarrassments which are thrown in their way, tend rather to frustrate than to enforce their responsibility. For how can they in justice be made responsible for measures which have never been allowed a fair trial, or a free operation?

But

But while the Opposition are, in effect, absolving Ministers from their constitutional responsibility, they are endeavouring to make them responsible *in the public opinion* beyond all bounds of reason or justice. It cannot have escaped your notice, that, in the stile of party, it is perfectly of course to talk of the calamitous state to which *Ministers have reduced the Country* ; and that every circumstance of our situation that can excite the least regret, as well as the entire aggregate of our misfortunes, is, without the smallest proof, ascribed to their misconduct—as if it were our singular lot never to draw a blank in the lottery of fortune—as if it were in the power, even of the most extensive foresight, of the most consummate wisdom, and of the most unremitting caution, to controul events—as if it were not within the limits of possibility, that a Country might experience the extreme of adversity from other causes than the mismanagement of those who have the direction of its affairs. Amidst the direful and wide-spread ravages of that tremendous convulsion, moral and political, produced by the French Revolution—a convulsion that has shaken all Europe to its centre, and disturbed the very foundations of civil society—could it be expected that we should escape unhurt ? Could it be expected, that, after a four years contest in such a struggle, we should not have to regret, not only the loss of many valuable lives, but also a very considerable augmentation of our incumbrances, with all the embarrassments which such an augmentation necessarily brings

brings with it. Rather have we not abundant cause for thankfulness to Divine Providence that our situation is what it is—that our strength is unimpaired—that our trade is prosperous beyond all former example—that our resources are flourishing—and that our natural bulwark, our Navy, is so greatly superior to all that our enemies can oppose to it *? But when Ministers are concerned, no allowance is made for times or circumstances. Whatever is unfavourable, black, or inauspicious, is charged to their account; and they have no credit for the value of real or comparative advantages. Is this candid? If a ship were to come into port in a damaged condition, should we proceed directly to condemn the captain, without enquiring what storms, or what enemies he had met with in his voyage? And, in judging of the conduct of Mr. Pitt, and his associates in office, are we to take no account of the juncture in which they acted? Never before had an Administration so arduous, so critical, so perilous a period to encounter. Previously to the War, the overwhelming influence of the New System which France held up for the imitation of all mankind, produced a crisis big with immediate danger to the Constitution. I need only recal to your recollection your feelings at that awful moment, to remind you of the danger with which it was fraught.

* A recent most brilliant Victory has shown, that with a great *inferiority* of force, British valour and conduct know how to conquer.

The combined activity of the evil-disposed, encouraged and elevated by the recent success of their confederates in France, and the infection which was hourly gaining ground in the minds of the lower classes (incapable of discovering either the fallacy or the mischief of the fascinating doctrines in which they were most assiduously instructed), were more than sufficient for the production of all the mischief which was apprehended by those who were most under the influence of alarm. Happily the evil was checked, by the firmness, spirit, and union displayed chiefly by the middle classes, associated for the support of Government and of the Laws, and for the preservation of the Constitution. I mention this, not for the purpose of ascribing any merit to Ministers, for it is well known that the associations were in no respect the result of the interference of Government, but the spontaneous act of that body of the people, who distinguished themselves on the occasion. The subject is here introduced merely to show the complexion of the times, and the dangers produced by the French Revolution, even before it had involved us in actual hostility.

Then came the War in which we were so reluctantly compelled to engage—A War in which the whole physical force—the entire strength and resources of France have, under the influence of the new principle, been exerted with a rage and desperation

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unknown to Goths, or Saracens, not merely to obtain conquests and to acquire universal dominion, but to carry into effect the infernal plan of disorganizing Society, of subverting every ancient institution, civil and religious, and of introducing the wild and destructive system of Liberty and Equality into every state, in order to secure its establishment in the mother Country of Anarchy. In this War we have been obliged to depend, in a great measure, on Allies, most of whom have acted either in a dastardly or a perfidious manner, and by their pusillanimity, or treachery, have enabled the Enemy, who had totally exhausted his own resources, to acquire fresh means of carrying on the contest, which, in all probability, he could not otherwise have continued to support.

Nor have the difficulties of our internal situation been less arduous or embarrassing. A desperate Republican Faction, enamoured of the charms of French Liberty, has unceasingly endeavoured, by the same means as had succeeded in accomplishing the destruction of lawful Government in France, to produce a like catastrophe in this Country. In direct and open communication with the regicides who deposed and murdered the French King, and who, on the ruins of his Throne, erected their Anarchical Republic, until the War rendered such communication too perilous to be continued;—avowing, in that intercourse, their in-

famous project of superseding the British Legislature by a National Convention—professing and inculcating with incredible zeal the principles of their Gallic friends, adopting even the style of their Revolutionary jargon, and imitating in the closest manner the whole of their conduct—Indefatigable in their endeavours, to spread the seductive poison among the labouring but unreflecting part of the Community, and to render that numerous and valuable class dissatisfied with the subsisting order of things, and eager to co-operate in producing a change, which they were easily led to believe could not but conduce to their advantage—proceeding by degrees to reduce into regular practice the system of Clubs, which had, more than any thing else, conduced to the overthrow of regular Government in France, and to marshal their disciples and converts, of whom the number was hourly augmenting, in a manner at once the most likely to elude suspicion, and the best calculated for encrease and co-operation *---advancing at length towards their grand object, the formation of a Convention, which was to assume all the powers of

* According to the modes of affiliation and division, when a Society or Club had attained its given number of Members, all fresh acquisitions were passed over to form new Societies in different districts, and thus the spread of these dangerous sectaries was every where promoted, while their concert and subordination were secured by the superintending controul of the common parent, the Corresponding Society.

Govern-

Government *; of which object they never lost sight, (although disconcerted in their attempt to establish such an Assembly in Scotland), until, by the interference of the Executive Power, some of their leaders were seized and brought to their trial for High Treason.—Such was the conduct of the Gallic Republican Faction in this Country—a conduct which Mr. Erskine describes by the soft term of “the honest but irregular zeal of some Societies;” and although such conduct and such views, were brought home to them at the State Trials, by the most unquestionable of all evidence, *their own papers and their recorded proceedings*, Mr. Erskine does not hesitate to assert, that “no Conspiracy against the Government has to this hour been detected.” A memorable instance this of the extreme absurdities to which party heat will expose even an enlightened mind. No one who lays any claim, I will not say to professional, but to common accuracy, will venture to justify such an assertion by the

* That this, and even more, were contained in their notion of a Convention, is demonstrated by the resolution of the Constitutional Society to insert in their books a speech of Citizen St. André, whom, together with Citizen Barrere, they elected a Member of their Society. The following is a part of the Speech thus adopted: “The powers of a Convention must, from the very nature of the Assembly, be *unlimited* with respect to every measure of General Safety, such as THE EXECUTION OF A TYRANT. It is no longer a Convention if it has not Power to TRY THE KING.”

verdicts

verdicts of acquittal, that were passed on the persons charged with High Treason, in compassing the death of the King. For, without laying any stress upon the opinion of a very considerable part of the Nation, as well as of the Profession, that, even as the law then stood, the Juries would have been fully justified by the evidence, in returning a verdict of "guilty," it was the universal opinion, and the universal language of the Country, that, if the prisoners had been indicted only for a Misdemeanour, instead of High Treason, they must have been convicted—So satisfied were the public by the evidence that a Conspiracy had been not only "detected," but *proved*. Nay, I know that some of the Jurymen, who had been artfully, though erroneously, prevailed upon to think that nothing short of direct evidence of intending to take away the King's life, could justify a conviction on a charge of *compassing his Death*, expressed their regret that the prisoners, in consequence of their being indicted capitally, escaped the punishment which they *undoubtedly* deserved. If, indeed, the existence of the Conspiracy depended upon Convictions, it has had the confirmation of that evidence in Scotland—where not only several persons have been found guilty and sentenced to transportation, upon a charge of that nature, but one unhappy man has been capitally punished; and, at the awful moment, when an immediate prospect of Eternity imposes the most solemn obligation to veracity that can operate

operate on human nature, confirmed his guilt, and that of his associates, by the acknowledgment of an extensive and deep laid plot of bloodshed and revolution. Hardened impenitence has sometimes resisted the influence of such a moment, by persisting falsely in protestations of innocence—but who ever heard, or who can conceive, of its producing a false confession of guilt ?

I forbear to trace the conduct of those men, after the evidence produced on the State Trials had put the public in possession of the extent of their plans, and had thereby rendered a change of system necessary. It is certain that they did not forego their object, but pursued it in a different way. All on a sudden these very persons who had before attacked the Constitution in a direct manner, and circulated, as the only true Creed the doctrines of the Rights of Man, which were immediately subversive of its fundamental principles, and which, indeed, denied its existence, turned short round and professed a veneration and an attachment for that very Constitution, which they had, just before, been labouring, with so little disguise, to destroy. They did not the less continue to intend its destruction, they only found it expedient to change the mode of attack. Reform now became their cry: well knowing that if they could but obtain permission to repair the edifice, they would soon level it with
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the ground. They avowed, however, the principles on which their reform was to be conducted, and which they pledged themselves never to abandon: namely, *Universal Suffrage and Annual Parliaments*; principles, which if once reduced into practice, would be as fatal to the Constitution, and which are in fact as incompatible with the existence of Monarchy, as the actual establishment of a Republic. Under this specious mask of reform they continued to propagate the most seditious doctrines, and to inflame the minds of the populace. The daring attack on his Majesty's person, in his way to Parliament, in November 1795, was the obvious and natural consequence of such proceedings. That wicked and diabolical attempt flashed instant conviction on the minds of all friends to order, that not a moment was to be lost in rendering the Laws, which, having been made in times of simplicity, were inadequate to reach the evasion of modern artifice, more effectual for the protection of Government against the wily machinations of French Revolutionary Treason. The result has been the enactment of those salutary Laws which have been attended with such happy consequences, and which, notwithstanding all the clamour that has been insidiously raised against them, are conducive, and indeed necessary, to the preservation of our liberties, since their effect, and their only effect, is to repress that licentiousness, which is the greatest enemy to genuine and orderly freedom.

Still,

Still, however, the turbulent and seditious spirit is checked rather than vanquished—the destructive flame is got under rather than extinguished—it lies smouldering beneath the restraints which have been put upon it, and discovers itself on a thousand occasions; and the most unremitting watchfulness is necessary to prevent it from bursting forth in a sudden explosion, and communicating at once to that immense mass of combustibles which has been long collecting, and which continues, at this moment, to be collected, with unabated industry.

Never before, I repeat, did it fall to the lot of any Administration to direct the affairs of the Country in so critical and arduous a conjuncture; never before had an Administration to encounter so many and such complicated difficulties, foreign and domestic, to face such portentous dangers both at home and abroad, or to conduct a War with so formidable, so ambitious, so desperate, so ferocious, and so perfidious a foe as France has been rendered by her Revolution. Never before, in short, was the face of Europe overspread with so deep and dreadful a gloom. If it could be shown by that arrogant, but inferior and second-hand wisdom which judges from events, that in so embarrassing a situation the very best measures were not discovered or adopted, it is far from being a matter of surprise, nor should it be a subject of censure. I am ready

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to admit that the wisest measures have not been adopted—that great errors have been committed—but these errors are of a very different kind from those charged by Opposition, and may in a great degree be attributed to the mischievous influence of that Party; which, under a pretended and popular affectation of an anxious desire to avert the calamities of War, discouraged the timely exertions of the spirit of the Country, when such exertions might have nipped the evil in the bud. It is easy now to discover that an early and active interference on our part, to resist the obvious designs of France against the security and independence of other States, was dictated by the soundest policy—and that, when we saw the Jacobin party, as soon as they had gained, by the influence of Clubs, the ascendancy in the councils of the degraded and nullified Monarch, compel him to declare that War against the Emperor of which they afterwards boasted, as their own act—when we saw the invasion of Flanders, one of the bulwarks of our own coasts—the decree for opening the Scheldt—the conquest of Savoy and Nice, and their formal annexation to France, in defiance of the decree professing to renounce all conquests—when we saw these ominous events (to say nothing of a great number of others of the like complexion) we may now say that common prudence suggested to us that it was high time to resist, with all our force,

force, the accomplishment of projects so unequivocal in their nature, and so ruinous in their tendency, as those which it was impossible not to ascribe to French Revolutionary ambition: and afterwards when we were, in spite of our pacific disposition, driven into the War, both wisdom and justice seemed to prescribe that we should direct our efforts to the destruction of the new system which prevailed in France, because that system had been the notorious and immediate cause of all the mischiefs we had to deplore or to dread, and was evidently incompatible with the peace and security of the rest of Europe. But although I can now see so clearly what conduct it would have been wise to adopt, I think it would be unjust to condemn Ministers for not having acted in that manner; partly because I am aware of the immense difference between a prospective and a retrospective view of things, and partly because I know the insuperable difficulties which the state of public opinion, at that time, assiduously cultivated as it was by the arts Opposition *, presented to the adoption of such a
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* It is well known what pains were taken by that party not only to stifle all suspicion of the dangerous tendency of the French Revolution, but to render that event an object of admiration and exultation, and even an occasion of festivity. The speech of Mr. Fox, in which he described this accumulation of crimes and misery, of horror and injustice, as the Most Stupendous Monument ever erected by Human Wisdom to Human Happiness, can never be forgotten. It is much to be lamented that this

line of conduct. One thing however is clear—that our main fault has not consisted in an eagerness for War, but in an imprudent indulgence of a disposition for Peace; which by making us wait till we were attacked in 1793, was the probable cause that the War, instead of being advantageously terminated before 1797, still calls for our utmost exertions to bring it to a safe and honourable conclusion.

I know it is contended by some persons that by judicious management, by mediation and negotiation, we might have arrested the progress of this scourge of the human race; that we might have prevented its existence with regard to ourselves, and its continuance on the Continent; and to prove this, is one main object of Mr. Erskine's work. When I hear such reasoning I cannot help comparing it to the assertions of a man who should maintain, after the face of the earth had been desolated by a furious hurricane, that, if we had endeavoured to conciliate the raging winds, and offered by treaty to appease the fury of the tempest, the evil might have been prevented. The Revolu-

Gentleman and his friends should rather choose to consider themselves as committed by such an expression, and pledged to vindicate, throughout, what they had once approved, than to acknowledge themselves susceptible of error---neither can it be forgotten that Mr. Fox likewise gave so rash and imprudent a proof of his enthusiastic zeal on this subject as openly to extol the defection of the French Troops from their lawful Sovereign, and *that* on the occasion when the army estimates of this Country were before the House.

tion was the hurricane which desolated a great part of Europe, and convulsed the foundations of Civil Society, and it has been no more in our power to resist its effects than those of a tornado, or an earthquake. The only difference between the two cases is, that in natural evils prevention is as much out of the power of mortals, as resistance—but in those that are moral, much is left to the foresight and prudence of man, who may frequently controul causes, though he may be totally unable to repel effects. If the Nations of Europe, by the aid of that preventive wisdom, which is one of the choicest gifts of heaven, had timely discovered the real nature and tendency of the French Revolution, and the fatal interest they had from the first in that event—if they had reflected that, considering the disorganizing principles on which that Revolution was founded, it was in the nature of things impossible that it should advance to maturity, without involving France in anarchy, and that it was equally impossible for such a Country as France to be involved in anarchy, without exposing the safety and disturbing the peace of every Country within the reach of her extensive influence—if they had duly considered that, notwithstanding the obvious policy of avoiding to excite too soon the alarm of other Countries, the most convincing proofs existed that the authors and promoters of the Revolution had formed a settled design to give the principles on which it was founded an universal operation, and to accomplish

accomplish the destruction of all established Governments, which they invariably represented as tyrannical and oppressive *—if they had attended to the
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* In proof of this I might cite the constant tenor of their speeches and transactions, their declaration of the Rights of Man, as well as the rest of their new Constitution, all which confirm in the strongest manner the following description given of the Revolution by Malouet: " This Revolution has had a peculiar character which belongs to no other ; that of generalising its principles, of applying them to every nation, every country, every Government." But I shall content myself with referring to the sitting of the Assembly on the 19th of June, 1790, when a disaffected Prussian, Anarcharis Cloots, appeared at the bar of the National Assembly, at the head of a motley group, professing to consist of deputies from all nations in the world, dressed in the habit of their respective Countries ; when this their Orator, in the name of the whole human race, delivered a petition, which was received by the Assembly with universal applause. This petition represented the approaching festival of the 14th of July as that of the whole human race---it stated that the trumpet which sounded the resurrection of a great Nation, had resounded to the four corners of the Earth, and that the chorus of 25 millions of freemen had awakened the Nations long buried in slavery---that a number of strangers from all parts of the earth asked leave to range themselves in the field of Mars (where the festival was appointed to be holden) in the confidence that their Countries, though now in chains, would one day be free by the influence of the unshaken courage and philosophical laws of France---that the people were every where under the yoke of Dictators who called themselves Sovereigns in defiance of French principles---and that it would be a lesson for Despots, and afford comfort for unfortunate Nations, to learn, from the petitioners, that the first Nation in Europe was assembling its standards, and had given the signal of happiness to both worlds.

acts of injustice, towards those foreign Powers whose resentment was least to be dreaded, which distinguished the early stages of the Revolution, and which announced what might be expected from

It will not suffice to attempt, according to custom, to get rid of such a scene by turning it into ridicule. For however ridiculous it may appear to some, particularly when it is known that the Petitioners were Frenchmen dressed up for their character from the Opera House, the scene itself was truly important, as it displayed in the strongest manner the real character of the Revolution, and the disposition of the Assembly itself with regard to foreign Countries, and was in reality an attack on the independence of all States. If the House of Commons were to receive with approbation and encouragement, or to receive at all, a like deputation (no matter whether real or fictitious) from other Countries, complaining of the tyranny of their Government, and soliciting relief, what could we expect but to be engaged in War in consequence of so gross an insult on foreign Powers: or if either House of the British Parliament had listened with silent commiseration to the complaints of the cruelly persecuted Clergy or Nobles of France, the most violent outcry would have been instantly raised by the friends of the Revolution, and the National Assembly would have considered such a conduct as an act of the grossest aggression, and as just cause for immediate War.---But according to the new System, a set of Revolutionary usurpers, because they assume the pretext and act in the name of liberty, are not only authorized to commit every species of crime, and even regicide itself at home, but to insult, menace, and disturb all mankind, while those Governments which are founded on ancient and lawful title, and whose authority is consecrated by time, have no right to be either offended or alarmed, and so far from being entitled to the just and natural privilege of retaliation, must not take the least precaution to preserve themselves or their states from the fate intended them by the dispensers of freedom.

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it, should it ever arrive at maturity—if in short, they had listened to the prophetic warnings of Mr. Burke, which have been literally accomplished, and to that description of this unexampled Revolution which he gave so early as the year 1790, and which experience has so fatally proved to be perfectly accurate—if, under the influence of such salutary impressions, they had interfered to stop the progress of an evil which was so *general* in its nature, and which threatened to produce such fatal consequences, Europe would at this time have been, in all probability, in a state of repose and security. And they had as much right to interfere for such a purpose, as a man has to destroy the eggs of a serpent, or as the inhabitants of a village have to extinguish a fire in a neighbour's house the moment it is discovered; particularly if the occupier should appear, from intoxication, or any other cause, regardless of the safety of his own dwelling, and, still more, if he should have shown symptoms of malice against the whole neighbourhood. The supreme and paramount law of self-preservation would have fully justified such an interference. For though every State has undoubtedly an absolute and exclusive right to regulate its own domestic affairs, and therefore a Revolution does not, of itself, authorize any foreign interference whatever, yet when a Revolution like that of France, instead of being confined in its principles and its objects to the Country where it takes place, seeks to extend its influence
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and to interfere with and molest other States, it cannot be doubted that all States have a right to join in order to crush it, before it can acquire strength to accomplish its destructive projects. This principle is fully confirmed by Vattel, in a passage which I have quoted on a former occasion—
 “ If then there be any where a Nation of a restless and mischievous disposition, always ready to injure others, to traverse their designs, and to raise domestic troubles, it is not to be doubted that all have a right to join, in order to repress, chastise, and put it ever after out of its power to injure them *”
 —but I do not, for my present purpose, want so much as is contained in that passage—for the interference I contend for, would not have been hostile to the French Nation, but only to a faction of that Nation, and friendly to its lawful Government and to the numerous party of Royalists; and Mr. Fox, in a speech made by him on the occasion of the restoration of the Prince of Orange, admitted that where there are two parties in a Country, one of them hostile, and the other friendly to us, we have a right to interfere in support of that which is friendly †.

But it would not answer the purpose of the opponents of Administration to consider the ques-

* Vattel, B. 1, C. 4.

† I have extracted this apt quotation from an inestimable work, recently published, entitled, “ An Historical Essay on the Ambition and Conquests of France,” p. 197.

tion, respecting the origin and causes of the War, upon so large a scale. They studiously decline all notice of the close and unavoidable connection between the French Revolution and the War, and of the facts and arguments, by which the latter has been proved, with mathematical precision and certainty, to have been produced by the former. Instead of thus viewing the subject *en grand*, they are perpetually exercising their ingenuity, either in inventing other causes to which they ascribe the War, but which had no more to do in producing it, than the remotest events recorded in history; or in quibbling about some *minutiae* of forms, which were as inferior to its real causes, as the undulating motion of a placid sea to the mountainous billows of the tempestuous ocean. Even in points of form, we have neglected nothing in our power to preserve and to restore Peace. But it is found necessary to throw all the odium of the War upon Ministers, and to prevail upon the public to think, that both its existence and its continuance are to be ascribed to their fault. In pursuit of this object it is the policy of Opposition to inculcate, as a general principle, that Ministers are prone to War, eager to engage in it without a cause, and obstinate to persist in it without necessity. Nothing can more effectually promote the ends of party than the prevalence of such an opinion; which cannot exist without creating a prepossession and a prejudice, extremely unfavourable to the exertions of Government, and
calculated

calculated to deprive it of that public confidence, which is essential to the energy of its conduct and the success of its measures. If the Country could be prevailed on to adopt this opinion, as a general principle, it would be easily persuaded to apply it to every existing case of hostility;—it would be ready to lend a willing ear to all the cavils of faction—it would be even disposed, of its own accord, to view with jealousy and suspicion the unavoidable continuance of a War, of the justice and necessity of which it had been fully convinced;—and it would, at length, be prevailed on to distrust the conviction of its own mind, and the evidence of its own senses, respecting the question of aggression, of which, at the time, it did not entertain the smallest doubt. By necessary consequence its support of Government would become weak, wavering, and ineffectual, and it would be prevented from enjoying those advantages which a prompt, vigorous, and decisive exertion of its spirit and resources, could not fail to insure.

It cannot, therefore, be a matter of wonder, that this imputed disposition of Ministers in favour of War, should be one of the favourite topics of Opposition—a theme on which they are perpetually descanting—nay, the ground-work of all their reasoning. If you were to examine their most laboured arguments, if you were to scrutinize a speech of Mr. Fox relative to the War, or the publication

of Mr. Erskine on that subject, you would find that the reasoning, both of one and the other, is indebted for all its speciousness to the supposition, that War is the interest and the choice of Ministers. But before we suffer ourselves to be prevailed on to adopt an opinion, which is capable of producing such serious consequences, it surely behoves us to inquire how far it is compatible with the situation, interests, and character of those to whom it relates; nor should we give it any place in our minds, unless we are convinced, not only that it is applicable as a general principle, but that it may justly be applied to those Councils of his Majesty, which have had the direction of public affairs during the momentous contest in which we are actually engaged.

Without adverting to other Countries, the Executive Government of this Country has every possible inducement to deprecate a state of War, and to desire eagerly a restoration of tranquillity whenever it has been interrupted. Nor is it necessary to ascribe this disposition to the superior interest which that branch of Government itself undoubtedly possesses in the public welfare, (which is not only endangered, but unavoidably injured by War); but the situation of those by whose advice it acts, conduces, in the strongest manner, to inspire them with the same disposition. The forms of the British

Constitution, particularly according to its modern practice, give occasion to so many clogs and impediments to the vigorous prosecution of a War, and expose the Ministers of the Crown, at such a time, to so many embarrassments, that the native spirit of the British people affords the best, if not the only security, that the honour and interests of the Nation shall not be sacrificed by a tame submission to insults and injuries from foreign Powers. But when that spirit subsides into an impatience for Peace, which it is apt very soon to do, particularly if the War be not immediately successful, the situation of Ministers then becomes arduous and embarrassing, beyond all powers of description. Opposition, studious to promote their own power, and to encrease their own consequence, are ever ready to flatter the public foibles, and, taking advantage of a daily encreasing wish for Peace, do not fail to render it subservient to their grand object. Then is it that Ministers are harassed and thwarted, badgered and goaded, menaced and vilified, in such a manner, that it should seem impossible for any one in his senses to envy them their situations. Nor could any thing but a sense of the important trust they have undertaken to perform, and a consciousness of rectitude, support them under difficulties so weighty and complicated as they have then to sustain. Every measure proposed by them, however wise, however necessary, nay, in proportion to its wisdom and necessity, is sure to be encountered with violent opposition. Their conduct in every particular is
invariably

invariably subjected to the grossest misrepresentation. Much as they stand in need of all possible aid and support, they have not a chance even for common candour. They are called upon to answer for events, they are made responsible for the seasons and the elements, for the effects of climate and the ravages of disease. Every failure and disaster is laid to their charge, while they are allowed no credit for success, which is attributed rather to mere chance or good fortune, than to their vigilance, activity, or management. In short, they are obliged to fight their way inch by inch, and have a much severer combat to sustain with party at home, than with the enemy abroad.

How then, unless Ministers are composed of different materials from the rest of the world—unless, like salamanders, their element is fire—how can they be supposed to possess a predilection for War! How can it be imagined that, in order to plunge the Country in a state so irksome to themselves, they should be eager to seek for grounds of quarrel; or that, being involved in such a state, they should be pertinacious in rejecting any fair and practicable means of accommodation! Is it not much more to be apprehended, that, for their own ease, quiet, and advantage, they should be anxious to preserve or to restore Peace, even at the expence of the honour and interests of the State? Instead of their having any inducement to wish for
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a situation, in appearance, so little to be coveted as that of War, every motive by which they can be supposed to be actuated has a tendency directly the reverse. Whether they be under the influence of personal ambition, (which, in a proper sense, is an honourable and useful impulse), or whether they be engaged in the ignoble pursuit of popularity, War is alike hostile to their views. If they be suspected of an immoderate attachment to office, nothing else can be so unfavourable to their wishes as an interruption of Peace: of this Opposition are so well convinced, that they always take advantage of a time of War to make their grand attack upon Administration; and, in order to promote the success of that attack, they represent it as an established maxim, that the Minister who begins the War never concludes it.

Many and great are the inconveniences which unavoidably result from this practice of embarrassing the Executive Government, in time of War. It cannot fail, at least, to impede the success of our arms. It creates disunion and dissention at home; it inspires the enemy with confidence, and renders him bold and enterprising in hostility, haughty and unreasonable in negotiation. It operates as an encroachment on some of the most valuable Prerogatives of the Crown, which it not only deprives of their beneficial energy, but reduces almost to a nugatory form; and it thereby violates
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the spirit of the Constitution, and endangers the liberties of the subject, of which the Regal Prerogatives are, to the full, as necessary a security as the privileges of Parliament. For Opposition, rather than not avail themselves of every advantage which their Parliamentary situation affords them, endeavour to snatch the Crown itself from the Royal Brow, in order to place it on the table of the House of Commons. Such a conduct tends even to degrade Parliament itself in the eyes of the people; who find it difficult to preserve their respect for that august body, when they see that every suggestion of party, however unfounded or frivolous, however impertinent, perverse, or factious, though unable to influence its resolves, can always command its time, and engage its most serious and earnest deliberations *: or, which is still worse, when

* What can be said when at a crisis so urgent as the present, it is in the power of Opposition, at their pleasure, to engage for many hours the time of Ministers, and the attention of Parliament, in discussing a proposal to solicit the interference of the Crown with an Ally, deserving of the utmost respect and confidence, for the purpose of obtaining the release of a prisoner of War; a man---totally unconnected with this Country, and, far from having any claim upon our gratitude, deserving our deepest resentment for the bitterest injury, accompanied, not only with a breach of hospitality, but with such a violation of that temporary allegiance which attaches upon residence, as would have subjected him to the penalties of High Treason; a man---who has no recommendation, unless it be thought a recommendation to have preached "the sacred right of insurrection," to have been
a traitor

when they see that the Legislative character, with which the members of Opposition are invested, and the sacred freedom of debate, under which they shelter themselves, can be made subservient to the execrable purpose of corrupting the public principle, of creating disaffection, of encouraging a contempt for the laws, and of those by whom the laws are made and executed, and even of exciting to insurrection, bloodshed, and Civil War. I am sorry to say, that instances of this kind are to be found in the annals of the last Parliament. These are strong charges, but they are authorized by well-known facts. The times call upon every honest man to speak out. I would not say so much under the cover of concealment: it would not be manly—it would not be candid. And the persons of whom I

a traitor to his Sovereign, and an original promoter of a Revolution, that has, not only involved his own Country in ruin, but exposed every Country to a similar fate! Who can refrain from regretting such a waste of valuable time, as could neither be atoned for by the sound reasoning and convincing eloquence of a Pitt and a Windham, nor by the rejection of the ridiculous and impertinent proposal by an immense majority?

It may not be generally known that M. de la Fayette, the unworthy object of the above proposal, who, while he had the custody of his Royal Master, and his beautiful and dignified Queen, treated them with insulting brutality, when these unfortunate Personages escaped from their prison in the Thuilleries, issued a general order to all the Departments and Municipalities of France to employ all the means in their power to arrest the unhappy fugitives, pledging his own responsibility to sanction the base, the barbarous and treasonable act, which was perpetrated by the infamous Drouet.

ſpeak ſo freely will, ſurely, be the laſt to ſuggeſt, that the conduct of public men ought not to be brought to the ſevereſt ſcrutiny, or be diſcuſſed with the utmoſt freedom.

Without, however, meaning to dwell on the various inconveniences reſulting to the State from the practices to which I allude, it ſuffices for my purpoſe to have ſhown, that ſuch practices tend, by the operation of every motive by which mankind are uſually influenced, to excite in Miniſters ſuch an averſion from War, as may be extremely unfavourable to the ſafety, honour, and real proſperity of the Country.

But never had a Miniſtry ſuch temptations to indulge, at any risk, a pacific diſpoſition, as at the commencement of the preſent War. Never had a Miniſter ſuch powerful inducements as Mr. Pitt, to avoid, by all poſſible means, an interruption of tranquillity. I need not ſurely recal to your recollection the gloomy, critical, and alarming ſtate of public affairs, when that gentleman was honoured with the moſt efficient and reſponſible ſituation in his Majeſty's Executive Councils. Neither can it be neceſſary to remind you of the brilliant ſucceſs which has attended his endeavours to reſtore the finances of the Country, and to place its credit on a firm and durable baſis. But that ſucceſs, which was in a rapidly progreſſive ſtate at the breaking out of hoſtilities, depended for its continuance on the preſervation of Peace. Is it poſſible

to conceive a stronger motive to excite in a Minister the utmost reluctance to engage in War? Could any thing more powerfully impel him to shun, by every practicable expedient, a state of hostility, than the consideration that it was sure to interrupt, and likely to frustrate, the operation of measures nearest his heart.—Measures which had answered his most sanguine expectations, and which, besides involving in their issue the prosperity of the Country, were inseparably connected with those personal feelings that excite the liveliest interest in the human breast. No one who judges of the conduct of men by the principles of human nature, or by the ordinary motives of human actions, will readily believe that a Minister, so circumstanced, was desirous of precipitating the Country into an unnecessary War; or, in other words, that he was solicitous to blast his fairest hopes, to destroy the most substantial pillar of his fame, and utterly to deface the brightest ornament of his administration. This is a case wherein either the evidence or the presumption would be amply sufficient to bring conviction to the mind, respecting the question of aggression; but when the evidence and the presumption so strongly corroborate each other, who but the most credulous and unreflecting dupe can expect credit for sincerity, when he professes to believe that the guilt of aggression lies at our door?

The same reasons, both of a general and particular nature, which had so powerful a tendency to

induce Ministers to deprecate the existence of the War, must operate with redoubled force in making them anxious for its termination. On whom does the War, with all its train of inconveniences, bear so hard as on those who have the conduct of it, and on whom of course it imposes difficulties which no other description of persons can experience? Who can have so much reason to regret its continuance, as they who have to encounter the arduous and invidious task of providing the necessary supplies for its prosecution, and who incur the odium of adding largely to the immense bulk of the national debt, and of encreasing the heavy load of public burdens? Who are likely to feel so pungently, and to regret so deeply, the necessity of accumulating the incumbrances of the State, as they on whom that necessity imposes the cruel mortification of being obliged to counteract, at the very moment of success, their own plans for the reduction of those incumbrances? But I am really ashamed of having employed so much time in illustrating a matter that is, of itself, so extremely obvious.

It appears then, upon a fair and candid enquiry, that the opinion which is so assiduously cultivated for party purposes, and which we are too apt to adopt without consideration, that the propensity of Ministers is for War, is fraught with absurdity, since the disposition it supposes is at variance with those feelings which, being founded in nature, may be considered as affording the surest test whereby to judge

judge of the motives of human conduct. Instead of there being any solid foundation for such an opinion, there is every reason to conclude, that the strong bent of British Ministers lies quite the other way; and that, instead of seeking for War, every consideration arising from their situation in office must induce them, by all the means in their power, and almost at any risk, to avoid a state of hostility, and still more to accelerate a return of Peace whenever it has been interrupted. These motives to cultivate a pacific disposition are so powerful, that they might almost be expected to counteract a peculiarity of character of an opposite tendency. But so far from the present Ministers of the Crown being distinguished by such a peculiarity, that the most responsible, because certainly the most efficient, of those Ministers has, (as I have shown), staked the grand objects of his political life upon a system so decidedly pacific, that its success could not fail to be interrupted by the slightest rumour of hostility. Nor has it ever been doubted, that the other Ministers who came into office with him have coincided in all his views, and co-operated cordially in all his measures. And I believe it will be too much, even for the Opposition, to maintain, that the Duke of Portland and his friends would have joined, or even supported, an Administration which they saw disposed to plunge the Country in an unjust and unnecessary War.

I am fully aware of the illiberal constructions to which every one is exposed who urges any thing
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that can operate as a justification of Ministers; and I know that under such an impression many persons suffer themselves to be restrained, by a kind of false delicacy, from expressing their real sentiments in favour of men in power. But it is time to lay aside false delicacy in regard to all who have any concern in public affairs, and to deal even-handed justice both to Ministers and their opponents. The preservation of the State depends upon the prevalence of a just opinion, both of persons and things; and it is the duty of every one to come forward, and avow himself, in respect of both, in a manly and explicit manner. He must, indeed, possess a sordid soul, who, at such a time, can suffer any personal considerations whatever to bias his judgment, or to supersede those feelings which a crisis like the present ought to inspire. Conscious as I am that the influence of those feelings can alone direct my pen, I shall not be restrained either by that unwillingness to give offence, which, as a general disposition, I hope ever to cultivate, or by a fear of resentment, which, when it is at variance with duty, I hope ever to despise, from continuing to display the conduct of Opposition in what I think its proper colours. Nor shall any dread of misconstruction prevent me from declaring, that without indiscriminately approving (as I have already and frequently intimated) of the entire system of the present Administration, I think they possess the justest claim to the confidence of the Country; and that the escape of the Country from the worst of evils depends upon their continuing to possess that
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confidence : that in talents and integrity, in personal disinterestedness, in assiduity of application, in ardour for the public welfare, they, at least, can vie with any Administration recorded in the British history : and, (which is a consideration never to be overlooked in forming an estimate of public men), that their personal characters and private lives afford a valuable pledge for the rectitude of their public conduct, and the purity of their political views. In addition to this sincere and deliberate opinion of the present Administration in the aggregate, an anxious solicitude for the fate of my native soil, with which all my hopes on this side of the grave are embarked, impels me to declare, that I consider Mr. Pitt as possessing stronger claims to British gratitude than could, with propriety, be urged by any of his predecessors—that the services rendered by him, and which raised the Country from the most adverse state, to the highest pinnacle of Prosperity, have enabled it, not only to maintain itself under the most arduous conflict in which it was ever engaged, but to acquire that superiority of force which we happily possess over the enemy—that his capacious, firm, and dauntless mind seems to have been formed for effecting our deliverance from the dangers of the present unexampled Crisis—that, in short, he is the SHEET ANCHOR of the Country—FOR GOD'S SAKE BEWARE LEST YOU LOSE THAT ANCHOR.

It is before stated, that the grand object of all the acts and cabals of Opposition is to render Ministers unpopular ; and that, for this purpose, un-
ceasing

ceasing pains are taken to excite general belief that they are prone to War. Perhaps you will ask, is then the British Nation become so unwarlike—so fearful of danger—so destitute of strength and resources—so unconscious of spirit, fortitude, and energy—that the ready way to depreciate its rulers in its opinion, is to represent them as disposed to indulge that martial ardour by which the Country has frequently reaped, not merely great heroic fame, but much solid consequence, and much lasting advantage. Far be it from me to entertain such a thought. The true old British spirit is still what it ever has been. But, without supposing Britons to have degenerated—without supposing them less ready than ever to face the greatest danger, and to revenge the slightest insult, they may, nay, they ought to detest a Minister who would rashly plunge them into a War; and their good sense would impel them to do so, as much as their spirit would make them despise a timid and pusillanimous Minister, who would sacrifice their honour, or their interests, to the preservation of Peace. But, notwithstanding the soundness of British judgment, which I deem to be more cool, more matured, and more under the influence of reflection than that of any other people in the world, and which was never more strongly pronounced than in favour of the present War, it should be remembered, that our countrymen partake of human nature, and consequently that they quickly become weary of a situation which cannot fail to be

be irksome and disagreeable. War, therefore, soon excites their disgust; and the conductors of it are easily rendered the objects of their suspicion. These feelings are greatly heightened by the effects of the funding system, particularly at the great extent to which it has been carried; and they are assiduously encouraged and stimulated by the arts of Party, to which a state of hostility affords innumerable advantages. Thus, without the least disparagement of the spirit of Britons, it is undoubtedly true that they are in danger of forgetting for the moment that Peace, if purchased at the expence of honour and security, is a much greater evil than War, because it leaves us exposed to all the mischiefs which it is the proper object of War to prevent. Having for some time experienced the inconveniences, and being tremblingly alive to all the apprehensions, which in a great commercial country, dependent on credit, are inseparable from a state of War, they are too apt to make every other consideration give way to an impatience for repose; and even to sacrifice, to the unfounded hope, and the unsubstantial appearance of Peace, what is necessary to its reality and enjoyment. Like a young girl, who, listening only to the suggestions of her fancy, which is sure to paint every thing in conformity to her wishes, rushes blindly into wedlock, without considering that the object of her choice may prove the instrument of her ruin, and the misery of her life.

You must excuse me if I suggest in this place, that, of all classes of men, the mercantile interest is most subject to those sudden alarms and apprehensions, which induce a blind and inconsiderate impatience to get rid of War, almost on any terms. Feeling more sensibly than others the immediate and unavoidable inconveniences of War, and seeing only in the bright perspective of Peace those advantages which are instantaneous to none but themselves, gentlemen of this description are apt too easily to forget that if Peace be destitute of a solid foundation, its benefits will be transient, and its permanent effects will be more ruinous to them than to any other part of the Community.

Suffer me to admonish you of the extreme absurdity, as well as of the ruinous consequences, of giving way to those panics, to which a wealthy and commercial people are most exposed, and which tend directly to produce the mischief that is most apprehended. If your persons were called out to a service of danger you would be as bold as lions, but the most distant apprehension respecting your property and your commerce unmans you quite, and deprives you not only of your fortitude, but also of your judgment, discretion, and prudence. You communicate the contagious impulse from one to another, until alarm increases into despondency—your boding fancy presents to the mind the most gloomy pictures of bankruptcy and ruin—and
all

all the while it is more than probable that the danger consists altogether in the fear.

The mischiefs arising from the prevalence of such a disposition for alarm are great beyond conception. Credit, both public and private, receives an immediate and sensible injury. The funds, which are too much considered as the test of national prosperity, suffer a serious depreciation, and the effect of unfounded apprehensions becomes the cause of real danger. Our energy is palsied, and our spirit of exertion apparently extinguished. And while we magnify, beyond all bounds, those dangers that appear to be immediate, and which would instantly vanish before a little resolution, we lose sight of those that are distant, but which, if not anticipated by seasonable prevention, will advance with the certainty of time, and prove too much for all our exertions effectually to encounter.

This disposition to indulge frivolous alarm, which, though it chiefly predominates in the mercantile class, extends too much to all classes of the community, points out to the Enemy in what manner he can most effectually distress and injure us. To this may be attributed those menaces and preparations for an invasion, which keep us in constant agitation, but which are rendered formidable only by our own apprehensions. Prepared as we ought to be, and as, happily, we are (thanks to the precau-

tions and persevering vigilance of Government, in spite of the obstacles thrown in its way by the Opposition) the idea of an invasion should not inspire us with the smallest dread. But while the reality is calculated rather to excite emotions of disdain than of terror, we have suffered the idea to produce effects, which would have been attended with the most serious consequences, had they not been counteracted by the wise and salutary measure, adopted by the Privy Council, and since sanctioned by Parliament,

Nor are the enemies at home less ready to take advantage of our unnecessary fears, from which they derive too favourable an opportunity to be neglected for embarrassing Government. When panic has taken possession of the public mind, we are sure to find the Opposition busily employed in painting every thing in the blackest colours, in magnifying every real cause for alarm, in suggesting others that are imaginary, and in endeavouring to prevent the Nation from recovering its firmness and energy. It is impossible that the late events respecting the Bank, and the conduct of Opposition on that occasion, should not here present themselves to your thoughts. By the operation of one of those panics to which I have alluded, a run took place on the Bank, which threatened in a short time almost to drain it of its specie. The Executive Government wisely stepped in, at the critical moment, and preserved
both

both the Bank and the Nation from so great a calamity; and the measure which was adopted for that purpose has been declared by Parliament to have been founded in necessity. That measure, though indispensably necessary, was nevertheless calculated to superadd another alarm to that which before existed, unless it could be proved, to the satisfaction of the public, that in reality it afforded no just ground for apprehension. A Parliamentary investigation was therefore instituted, and the result has been that the Bank is not only solvent, but wealthy, and that it possesses a large surplus beyond what is sufficient to meet every demand that could be made upon it; although it has been found necessary, for the sake of the public, to suspend a compliance with those immediate and unusual demands for specie which were brought against it—not in the way, or for the purposes of business—nor under any doubt of its solidity—but for the purpose of being hoarded and thereby taken entirely out of circulation, and under the influence of a preposterous and greatly exaggerated fear of invasion. The circumstances of the Bank being proved to be so flourishing, it was natural that confidence should revive, and that the *secondary* panic should entirely subside. These effects have, happily, in a great measure, been produced. But it cannot be forgotten that the Opposition have done all in their power to prevent a revival of confidence and courage, and have seized the opportunity to endeavour to inflict a wound on the national credit, and to re-
present

present a measure, which incidental and collateral circumstances had rendered necessary, even for the protection of the interests of each individual public creditor, as a violation of public faith, and almost as an act of National Bankruptcy *. So barefaced and

* That the Ruling Powers in France both know and acknowledge the value of the services they have derived from the Opposition in this Country, and particularly on this occasion, is evident from the following paragraph extracted from the *Redacteur*, the paper immediately and avowedly under the influence of the Directory. " Private letters from London of the 1st of March state, that the ferment occasioned by the suspension of payments at the Bank, is now at its height, and that the strength of Opposition increases with the embarrassments of Government." The recent declaration ascribed in the public prints to Mr. Fox, that in his opinion the injury sustained by public credit could not be removed during the War, nor even by a Peace, unless that event should take place very soon, will doubtless strengthen the confidence which the Directory seem to place, and with good reason, in the exertions of that gentleman and his friends. Be that, however, as it may, I would put it coolly to the consideration of that gentleman, whether he conceives such a declaration calculated to accelerate the return of Peace, which he states to be so immediately necessary, or whether it is not more likely to stimulate our enemies to pursue, with increasing activity, their grand object, the ruin of this Country, and for that purpose to renounce all ideas of Peace, without which, if they believe Mr. Fox, our " public credit cannot stand," and of course our ruin must be accomplished. After such a declaration, as well as many others of a like tendency, it is certainly fair to consider the language and conduct of Opposition as among the principal obstacles in the way of Peace.

I cannot

and profligate an attempt will, I trust, completely open the eyes of every cool, sedate, and thinking man, and indeed of the Public at large, respecting the real character and pernicious conduct of this Party.

But, to return from this digression, it seems that the strong bias both of Government and People is

I cannot refrain from observing in this place, that the speeches of the Opposition Members in Parliament, instead of appearing to be intended for the consideration of those to whom they are immediately addressed, or to promote the objects of fair discussion and calm deliberation, seem to be solely calculated for the production of some effect out of doors. Often they are remarkably adapted to encourage the hopes of the Common Enemy--to furnish him with arguments in defence of his ambition, insolence and injustice, which his inferior ingenuity had not discovered, but of which he is sure to avail himself---and even to direct his efforts where they may most effectually injure us. At other times they appear to be addressed, either to the agents of sedition at home, in order to furnish them with plausible pretexts for their conduct, and to stimulate them to perseverance and activity in their traitorous designs; or to the people at large, with a view to damp their loyalty, to inflame their passions, and to fill their minds with despondency and disaffection. Even the inhabitants of the Sister Kingdom come in for their share of these attentions. Thus, when it was thought not unlikely that the Enemy would attempt an invasion in Ireland, the harangues of Opposition had a direct tendency to excite the Irish people to discontent and even to insurrection; and when such an attempt had actually been made, the object of those speeches seemed to be to stifle and suppress the spirit of loyal exertion, which so honourably distinguished our fellow-subjects on the other side of St. George's Channel on the occasion.

sure to be in favour of Peace, and that, generally speaking, the danger of a precipitate pacification is much more likely to be realized than that of a too obstinate prolongation of War, although the former is by far the worst of the two extremes. Both currents setting in the same way, the vessel is exposed to be driven into the unfathomable gulph of a delusive, dishonourable, and insecure peace. But, on the other hand, there is not the smallest danger that Peace will be delayed one moment after it can be obtained on safe and equitable terms. Such a case is scarcely within the limits of possibility, because there exists no where the least inducement or temptation to produce it; and the Minister who should be able to relieve the Nation from the calamities of War, and at the same time to secure its honour and its interests, would be considered as the most fortunate and enviable of men. What important services then might be rendered by an honest and virtuous Opposition, who, solicitous only for the public weal, should endeavour to keep alive that sense of honour and that attention to future security, which are in such danger of being sacrificed to an undue and inconsiderate eagerness for repose. But instead of acting in so noble and disinterested a manner, that Party seek to increase the public impatience for Peace, by presenting constantly to the view every inconvenience, disaster, and danger resulting from the War, by even loading with exaggeration every subject of complaint or apprehension

apprehension which the War has actually occasioned, and by ascribing to it evils of which it is in no respect the cause; and this, in order to encrease that inclination, which all who suffer, naturally feel to complain, into a disposition to lay the whole blame upon those, whose misfortune it is, at such a time, to have the direction of public affairs.

It almost exceeds belief that such a conduct, alike reprehensible and mischievous even in ordinary Wars, should be pursued in a War, on the success of which depends not merely the existence of this Nation, but that of civilized Society itself. And yet such a scene is daily presented to our view; we see Government opposed in the most virulent and vexatious manner, and all its endeavours for the public good thwarted by that remnant of Party, which now monopolizes the appellation of Opposition; and which was insensible to the influence of those conscientious motives that would not suffer the Duke of Portland and his friends to continue in Opposition, when the new and unprecedented danger, which menaced this Country in common with the rest of Europe, began to show itself in an unquestionable shape. The gentlemen who rather than pass over, in like manner, to the defence of our Constitution, Laws, and Religion, and of Social Order itself, which were all directly attacked, chose to remain in the ranks of Opposition, seem to think themselves absolved from all restraints, even of de-

tency and decorum, by the absence of those distinguished characters, of whose respectability they were wont to boast, as if conscious that it was essential to their own. They seem determined to make up, by their extreme violence and desperation, what they lost of consequence by the secession of such characters from the Party. No considerations of public safety can induce them to change their conduct, or even to assuage their violence. They seem determined to risk even the last extremity, and to expose the State to absolute destruction, nay themselves to drive the vessel on the rock, rather than renounce their project of seizing the helm. In the vehemence of contention they even lose sight of the dictates of common prudence. It is said that rats are restrained by instinct from perforating the sides of a ship, with which, if it perish, they must perish too; but instinct, as well as feeling and principle, is overwhelmed in that tempest of passion which is produced by cupidity of power, and increased by long disappointment and unsuccessful struggle. I blush for human nature when I see it thus degraded. Were the conduct of this Party, during the present War and for some time previous thereto, to be faithfully delineated, a picture would arise, the most odious and disgusting that ever excited the horror of mankind, the French Revolution itself only excepted. I do not pretend to hold a pencil that can do justice to such a subject. I shall therefore content myself with reminding you

that

that the Members of Opposition have done every thing in their power to clog the wheels of Government during a contest with the most formidable and destructive enemy we ever had to encounter—to impede and frustrate every measure adopted to preserve the Nation from the worst of evils to which it was ever exposed—to excite discontent and despondency—to wound the public credit—to injure the public revenue *—to damp the spirit, to repress the ardour, to counteract the efforts, and to depreciate the resources of the Country—in short, to reduce us to that state of distress and despair which might induce, not a wish (that is impossible), but a fullen willingness to have recourse, by way of forlorn hope, and as the last desperate remedy, to their proffered assistance. But shocking as such practices are, the worst part of the description remains to be given,

It would be an unpardonable defect in the history of Opposition during the period I allude to, not to notice, in a special manner, their conduct in two particulars, respecting the foreign and

* This disposition to injure the Revenue has been carried into private life, where we have been accustomed to see men, even of rank, who have renounced the garb of gentlemen, in order to evade a tax, imposed upon a mere luxury of dress, and the unproductiveness of which must have an obvious tendency to make the public burdens fall more heavily upon the inferior classes of the Community. Oh ! Shame, where is thy blush ?

domestic enemies of the Country. Of the first they have been the strenuous advocates, pleading their cause, vindicating their pretensions, seeking excuses for their ambition and injustice, encouraging their hopes, promoting their designs, justifying their attacks upon ourselves and their attempts to disorganize Europe, and labouring on all occasions to prove *them* in the right, and *us* and our Allies in the wrong. But that is not all. They have stood forward as the patrons of that implacable enemy of the human race, inferior in malice and mischief only to Satan himself—that cause of all our distress and of all our danger—the FRENCH REVOLUTION. They have most assiduously endeavoured to weaken the horror, alarm, and indignation, which that event ought to inspire, and which were necessary to preserve mankind from the influence of the contagious and seductive example. For this purpose they have lost no opportunity of making it the subject of their most extravagant encomiums. They have openly espoused its cause, they have sanctioned, and even adopted its fundamental principles *, they have

* Mr. Fox will surely be allowed to speak for the Party, since they have never in any respect disclaimed his sentiments; on the 13th of December, 1792, that gentleman is reported, in the Registers of Parliamentary Debates, to have said, that “the right of the House of Brunswick to the Throne originated in the only genuine fountain of all Royal Power—the Will of the Many.” And on February 1, 1793, he is also reported to have maintained the following French Revolutionary doctrines, the natural

have favoured its perfidious disguises, they have deplored every obstacle it had to encounter, every disaster it had to surmount—they have exulted in its successes, although those successes menaced with total destruction the Balance of Power, and the existence of regular Government—and they have palliated its deepest guilt, by ascribing the most shocking atrocities that ever stained the page of history to an ardour for liberty, inflamed, as they alledge, by the resistance and the provocations of Great Britain and her Allies. This mode of accounting for, and extenuating, the unparalleled crimes of the French Revolution, in order to blunt the edge of that horror which such crimes are calculated to inspire, has been adopted by Mr.

ral source of rebellion and treason, and the promulgation of which, even if they were theoretically true, (which I deny) can tend only to subvert all legitimate authority, to destroy all social ties, and to convince the multitude that conspiracy, insurrection, treason, and regicide are lawful acts. The doctrines I allude to are that “the people are the Sovereigns in all Countries, that they may at pleasure amend, alter and abolish the form of Government under which they live---that they may cashier their Monarchs for misconduct---and” (after repeating that the House of Brunswick was *elected*, deducing as a general conclusion a most mischievous application of the above principles) “that the present family enjoyed the Throne from the Sovereignty of the people.” See Debrett’s Parliamentary Register for 1793, page 417. I should be happy to learn that Mr. Fox has been misquoted, and to make my *amende honorable* for adopting the misstatement.

Erskine.

Erskine. Were so gross an insult on common sense deserving of serious notice, it would more than suffice to observe, that the French Revolution had displayed a decided character of *blood* long before there were any Allies to oppose its progress, and even before there was a complaint of any provocation on the part of foreign Powers *; and that it had shown, from its very commencement, and in its first acts, so ferocious and cruel a disposition, as to preclude all necessity of resorting to external causes to account for the maturer horrors which marked its progress.

The conduct of the Opposition in relation to the Republican and Jacobin faction at home has, if possible, been still more atrocious. They have always been ready to step in between that faction and the laws, and to shelter it from the interposition of justice. They have countenanced its pro-

* The first Revolutionary murders which were committed in Paris (in June, 1789) were accompanied with the cannibal ceremonies of mangling the dead bodies, of tearing out their hearts, and of carrying through the streets the bleeding heads, elevated on pikes, two of which, those of Father and Son-in-law, were paired together, and frequently made to salute each other in their savage procession. On this occasion M. de la Fayette, who was Commandant of the National Guards, being presented at the Hotel de Ville with the reeking heart of one of the victims, received the barbarous insult with complacent smiles, and thus gave his sanction to the cruelties which then began to inundate France with human blood.

ceedings, sanctioned its excesses, and endeavoured to confound the unlimited and lawless freedom, with which it claimed the privilege of pursuing its atrocious designs, with the orderly, salutary, and constitutional liberties of Englishmen. They have always been ready, at a moment's warning, by clamour, invective, and ridicule, to discourage and cry down every attempt of legal authority to defeat its infamous and destructive projects. From the trial of the infamous incendiary, Thomas Paine, who was vomited forth from the French volcano to set this Country in a flame, to the judicial investigation of that conspiracy which (as I have already shown) was incontrovertibly proved at the Old Bailey, they have invariably contended, not merely for the impunity of this faction, but for its being suffered to act without the least restraint whatever; and when, at length, a crisis arrived which made it indispensibly necessary, without any farther delay, to invigorate the laws, and to render them more efficient for the suppression of dangers that had never before existed, even in idea, then did they make the most uncommon exertions to preserve this faction from extinction. They openly made common cause with it: they became mob orators, in order to inflame the populace, and enlist them in the service: they were proved to have employed the grossest arts of misrepresentation, in order to deceive the lower orders and obtain their co-operation: they avowed the levelling principle of equality,

and

and declared for numbers against rank and fortune: they invited assemblages of the people to the greatest possible extent—to such an extent as could not have failed to produce tumult and disorder, and as would have had a direct and obvious tendency to overawe the deliberations of Parliament. And at length their leader proceeded to declare, that if the Legislature should pass the two Bills then in discussion, (and of the necessity of which it had shown itself thoroughly convinced), all obligations to loyalty, allegiance, and submission both to Government and Laws, would be dissolved, and that resistance would become a question—*not of morality—but of prudence*. Happily those Bills were passed into Laws, and by their effects have recommended themselves to the admiration of the public. No man has experienced the least diminution of Constitutional Freedom, or been abridged of any privilege which his ancestors were accustomed to enjoy: and every good man rejoices that, by the aid of salutary regulations, restraints have been imposed on that licentiousness, which threatened speedily to destroy our liberties, both root and branch.

Thus have the Party whose conduct I think it my duty to arraign, taken under their special care and protection that Jacobin faction, which sought to sacrifice our sacred and venerable Constitution on the profane and ensanguined altars of French Revolutionary freedom. They cherished that faction

while it was only in embryo ; they guarded it from harm during the course of its formation ; they fostered its infancy with unceasing attention and solicitude ; they watched over its juvenile state with parental fondness ; and they boldly stood forth in its defence at the critical moment, when, approaching to maturity, it exposed itself to peculiar danger, by an open display of its real character, and a direct pursuit of its ultimate object. In truth, such have been their zeal and activity in favour of this faction, that should they be suspected of co-operating with it to the same end, they have only to thank themselves. I do not advance such a charge, for I merely consider them as a Desperate Party, ready to employ any means to effectuate their designs. But certainly they have had the appearance of joining in the attack, the compleat success of which would have been fatal even to their own hopes ; and rather than not embarrass Government, they have actually *favoured* that attack. They have not, indeed, been the besieging army, which assailed, directly, the fortress of the Constitution, but they have been the army of observation, which covered the approaches, which favoured the operations of the siege, and which opposed every endeavour to relieve the garrison ; choosing rather that the citadel should be exposed to a storm, than that they should not be entrusted with its defence.

When I addressed you in the month of September, 1796, anxious to found a call to union, I expressed a hope that the gentlemen of Opposition would suspend their schemes of ambition, and join with the rest of the Country in giving that cordial and unanimous support to Government which the crisis so urgently demanded. Such a hope was not, indeed, encouraged by a survey of their previous conduct. Still, however, the extreme and encreasing awfulness of the moment forbade me to despair, that a general and cordial co-operation of all parties, friendly to the Constitution, would not be wanting to assist the State at the crisis of danger; and, if any credit was due to the most solemn assurances and engagements, we had those assurances and engagements, often reiterated, on the part of Opposition, that if Government would make overtures for Peace, at least the happy effect of domestic union would be produced. It is to be remembered, that the pledge thus given was free from all retrospect, and was clogged with no other condition than that of inviting a negociation: in every other respect it was absolute and unconditional. The overtures required have been made and repeated; the condition, on which the pledge was given, has been strictly performed; but, alas! the pledge is not redeemed. The Party, that was as solemnly bound as language could bind it, has, after we have even offered specific terms of Peace, which admit of no question but whether they were
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not too liberal, receded from all its promises, and it continues to oppose Government with increased virulence and animosity. It recurs to its old hack-nied assertions (so often refuted) respecting the origin of the War; it again goes over all its beaten grounds of cavil and misrepresentation; and it even makes those advances to the enemy, which it had so often called for as the only step wanting to unanimity, a fresh subject of invective and reproach.

Thus have we not only been defeated in our endeavours to procure an immediate restoration of the blessings of Peace, but also disappointed in our hopes of obtaining that unanimity at home, which would give an irresistible force to our exertions against the common enemy. The latter misfortune greatly surpasses the former one; but the guilt will lie at their door, who not only refuse their aid to the State in its pressing exigency, but who take that occasion to add to its distress, by discouraging its efforts and embarrassing its operations. Compelled as we are, however, to prosecute the War, let us exert that spirit which adversity has so frequently called forth, and with irresistible effect, in the breasts of Englishmen. At least we have one advantage—an advantage derived in some measure from the late negotiation—we know to a certainty what dependence we may safely place on all those with whom we have to deal, both abroad and at

home; and we are freed from suspense on those points in which suspense would be most painful and injurious. We know now to a certainty that, not having been able to procure Peace by negotiation, we must open a way to it by the sword: we know that the Enemy has not only rejected with insolence, and even outrage, the most fair and honourable terms offered by us, but that he has displayed pretensions which to submit to would be to sign our own disgrace and ruin: and we may rest assured, with the most perfect confidence, that his Majesty's Ministers, who have used such repeated endeavours to bring about Peace, and who have such powerful inducements beyond all other persons to desire it, will neglect no opportunity to accelerate the return of that blessing.

The inflexible obstinacy—the increasing malignity with which Opposition persist in their hostility to Government, render it necessary that the ties of union be drawn closer among ourselves, and that our support of Government, by being more firm and active, be likewise more efficacious. We should also make it a point to give our support in such a manner as the circumstances of the Country and the exigencies of the moment seem most to require. And here I cannot refrain from recalling to your recollection the observations which I pressed upon your attention in my last letter, respecting public credit. The maturest reflection

flection has confirmed me in the opinion that the measure I then ventured to suggest, with the view of providing for the public exigencies, without subjecting the State to further incumbrances, or the subject to additional taxes, is the only one which it becomes us to adopt, because it is the only one which can afford effectual relief under our present difficulties. Had it been adopted we should not now see the Funds at their present low ebb, nor should we have to regret or to apprehend a further accumulation of the public burdens. It is not however too late. The measure is still perfectly within our competence ; and it is peculiarly suited to our circumstances of individual wealth, while it is equally calculated to relieve the State. Every motive that I before urged still exists, and with greatly encreased force, to recommend its adoption. And if you find, as I doubt not you do, your impatience for Peace augmented with the difficulties of obtaining it, an additional motive arises from that consideration in favour of a measure which, I will venture to say, is more particularly adapted to accelerate a Pacification, than all the other exertions we can make for that purpose. If any thing can dispose the enemy to listen to fair and reasonable terms, it will be a display of our ability to carry on the War, until such terms can be obtained. The ability we undoubtedly possess, and if we have not the spirit and sense to display and to exert it, let us commit all records of
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our history to the flames, and deface every remaining monument of our ancestors, before we listen to the dastardly councils of the Opposition, and prepare to bend our necks to the Gallic yoke. I will not, however, despair of the sense and spirit of Britons.—I will again appeal to their sense and spirit; and recommend to their serious consideration, and particularly to that of the mercantile class, the expediency—nay, the necessity—of meeting all the pecuniary exigencies of the State, until the contest can be safely and honourably terminated, by contributions from the incomes of proprietors. Could it be necessary to urge any personal considerations in support of a measure of such obvious utility, I need only ask you, whether it can admit of a doubt that, if such a mode of procuring the necessary supplies were resorted to, the value of your property (to say nothing of the security of those still more valuable interests which are at stake) would not be increased greatly beyond the amount of any contribution which even your known liberality and public spirit would induce you to make; or even beyond the emolument which the most selfish individual could hope to derive from the most beneficial loan in which he could be concerned. To carry this measure into execution, the interposition of Parliament is undoubtedly necessary; allow me, therefore, again to submit to your consideration, and that of your brother Merchants, the expediency of soliciting that interposition; not
merely

merely to give effect to the measure itself, but also to take the necessary precautions, that, while an opportunity is afforded to every one to indulge to any extent a laudable disposition to assist the Country, the burden may not fall exclusively upon those who are susceptible of the noble influence of patriotic motives. One respectable application to Parliament upon the subject, and the business is done. At such a time we should not be satisfied with waiting for the call of Government to aid the State: the call for every exertion should rather come from ourselves: we should impart the impulse rather than receive it.

But to render our support of Government efficacious, we must do our utmost to counteract the mischievous effects produced by the conduct of Opposition. This is the principal cause of our danger, and ought to be the grand object of our vigilance. The Enemy abroad is formidable principally because of this enemy at home. If that Party, which is a mill-stone about the neck of the Country, while it is almost overwhelmed with difficulties, were to listen to the call of duty, honour, loyalty, and patriotism—to suspend its projects of ambition, while our situation is so inexpressibly critical—and unite with us in support of the Crown, and of those in whom, according to its constitutional competence, the Crown chooses to confide—who is there that does not feel the most perfect confidence that we should rise

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greatly

greatly superior to all our embarrassments; that all the energies of the Country being called forth, all its strength and resources being applied against the foe, and all its attention being directed to the contest, instead of being distracted by domestic contentions, who does not feel that in such a case we should soon have it in our power to dictate terms of Peace? What is there, do you ask, to prevent so desirable—so necessary a state of union? Nothing but the necessity of Mr. Fox's being Minister, and of his political associates coming into office with him *. That necessity, however, besides being at variance with the pleasure of the Sovereign, (a consideration which no doubt they deem beneath their notice,) whose undoubted prerogative it is to choose his own Ministers, is not at all felt by the public; on the contrary, it would be considered by the public as one of the greatest of misfortunes, were these gentlemen to obtain the direction of public affairs. No one who reviews their conduct throughout the French Revolution, can contemplate, without shuddering, the idea of their attainment of power; or can consider such an event, if their conduct were to correspond with the language they have holden, and the principles they have avowed, otherwise than as the departing knell of the British Monarchy? There is, indeed, but one chance for such an event; namely, the occurrence of a moment of

* That necessity was stated at the last meeting of the Whig Club to be so urgent as not to admit of a moment's delay.

such universal consternation and despondency, as would afford them an opportunity of seizing the avenues to Government by surprize, and of taking possession of the citadel by *coup de main*. Of such a moment they know by experience how to profit, and they will neglect nothing in their power to hasten it. But while by a firm, vigorous, active, and confidential support of those who exercise the lawful authority by legitimate title, we shall, in all human probability, prevent the arrival of a moment so fatal in its consequences, it is of the utmost importance that we should also both resist and counteract the practices which tend to produce it. Much is in our power towards frustrating the mischievous arts of Opposition; and although we cannot command the desirable blessings of complete union and harmonious co-operation, we can do a great deal to lessen the evil inseparable from a state of division. On what do these practices depend for success but their effect on the public mind, which it is their object to unsettle and inflame, to keep in constant alarm and agitation, and to fill with discontent and distrust? Our first and most obvious duty, therefore, is to guard, as much as possible, that mind against such attacks, and to preserve it from such impressions. For this purpose, it would be necessary to imitate these domestic adversaries in one of their distinguishing qualities; a quality which is meritorious or detestable, as it is exerted in a good or a bad cause, but which, unfortunately,

is too much confined to the latter—I mean their *assiduity* ; which is so active and unremitting, that they never neglect even the minutest circumstance that can at all aid them to carry their point. With what industry do they circulate every species of publication calculated to inflame the passions, and to excite dissatisfaction and despondency, by magnifying our distresses, by painting our prospects in the blackest colours, and by censuring indiscriminately every measure proposed or adopted by Government. Who will pretend to estimate the mischief which has been done by such publications ? I am convinced that nothing has had more influence in producing the dangers and difficulties of our present situation. But while the most indefatigable labour is employed to circulate the poison, who takes any pains to apply the antidote ? Really we ought to blush at our torpor and supineness in this respect. Why do we not, with like assiduity, distribute from hand to hand whatever publications are calculated to animate the public ardour, to keep the public opinion in a proper tone, and to preserve from seduction the principles of those who, by their situation, are most exposed to it. The happiest effects were produced by such exertions at the close of the year 1792, when the loyal associations preserved the minds of the lower orders from that corruption, which was fast gaining ground upon them. The example of 1792 might operate as a very salutary lesson at the present period. But

without waiting for associated efforts, each individual should impose upon himself the duty of improving every opportunity, nay, of seeking and making opportunities, to render all the service in his power to a cause that involves the fate of his Country, and consequently of every thing dear to him as an Englishman.

We should not, however, be satisfied with opposing truth to falsehood, facts to misrepresentation, and sound reasoning to those perverse statements and specious fallacies, which are so assiduously promulgated, in order to vitiate the national mind, to suppress every principle of loyalty and patriotism, and to stifle every sentiment of honour, dignity, and fortitude. The most certain and effectual way to discourage and repress such mischievous attempts, is to display that just indignation which they ought to excite. It will not suffice to resist the allurements of vice, by calmly pointing out the superior excellence of virtue. If the conflict between these opposite principles were to depend solely on the influence of cool and dispassionate reasoning, the natural proneness of the human heart to evil would give a fatal bias to the judgment; and, aided by the artifices ever employed in a bad cause, would enable the vicious principle to obtain a complete ascendancy. It is our duty to encourage and promote a detestation of vice itself, not only because of its natural deformity, and of the ruin

and misery to which it leads, but also on account of the propensity of human nature to yield to its seduction. The passions cannot have a nobler object, nor a more useful application, than when they are so employed. And can there be any thing more vicious than to seek to sow dissention in a State, when, to all appearance, its preservation depends upon the harmony and co-operation of its members? Is it possible to conceive of any thing more flagrantly immoral and flagitious, than to labour to destroy the confidence of the people in the justice of their cause, and in the conduct of their rulers, when, without such confidence, they cannot hope to escape the worst of evils that can befall a nation? Can any thing, in short, be more deserving of abhorrence, than a systematic and unceasing endeavour to disparage and to frustrate every measure adopted by the lawful Government, to preserve the Religion, Laws, Constitution, and Independence of the Country, from the desperate attacks of Foreign Enemies, and, if possible, the still more desperate machinations of Domestic Traitors, Picture to yourself, for a moment, the shocking consequences that would ensue, if those attacks and machinations were to succeed. Every thing that contributes to render the English name great and respectable, and that has for ages warmed the breasts of Britons with a noble, generous, dignified, and irresistible ardour, would disappear in an instant; and this once potent Isle, whose Flag had long commanded respect
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wherever the Ocean was known to flow, and whose mild and beneficent Empire extended to the ends of the earth, would be reduced to that insignificance, which seems to belong to the almost imperceptible space it occupies on the map of the World. But the *moral* consequences would be infinitely worse than the *political*. We must not expect to exchange our state of greatness for one of innocent and virtuous simplicity, which, however unfavourable, in the present state of society, to national splendour, is still consistent with individual felicity. Vice and Impiety, released from their accustomed restraints, and recommended by the example and authority of their successful patrons, would openly triumph, and would introduce all that misery, public and private, which, by the irrevocable laws of Nature's God, inevitably follow in their train. The most abandoned licentiousness of manners, and the most furious and profligate passions, would prevail, and the vilest propensities of the vilest of our species would be let loose without any restraint:—Religion would become a subject of open mockery and derision—our churches would be shut up, excepting for the purposes of profanation—our streets would flow with blood—and we should at once experience the horrors of domestic anarchy and the miseries of subjection to foreign sway.

Such is the state to which the efforts of Opposition, by affording the Enemy his only chance for
success,

success, tend to reduce us. And am I chargeable with injustice, or even exaggeration, in stating the conduct which leads to such consequences, as vicious in the extreme, and as deserving the utmost abhorrence and detestation? Besides the turpitude immediately and inseparably attached to so profligate a course of proceeding, it conduces to the establishment of vice and irreligion as a system, and to the production of all the crimes that can debase human nature, and destroy the foundations of human happiness. Should we not then call in to our aid whatever can enable us to oppose with effect, practices so criminal and dangerous? Should we not both display and encourage that indignation, with which such practices must inspire every virtuous mind. Believe me it is by manifesting our just sense of their extreme wickedness, that we shall most effectually resist their progress, and prevent their success. It has been justly observed, that the influence of public opinion has a greater effect in discouraging vice and preventing crimes, than even the terrors of the law. The great body of the people, notwithstanding all the arts employed to corrupt it, is, thank God, sound. If that body were to show itself as it ought, sufficiently indignant at the conduct of the Opposition at so tremendous a juncture, the latter would not venture to act in such a manner, nor would the prints in their interest dare to be so licentious and inflammatory; or, if they did, the sentiments of that part of the public, which must,

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in every well ordered State, possess the greatest influence, being displayed with proper decision and energy, would give the tone to those of the lower orders, and preserve them from the contagion to which they are the most exposed. Nay, those orders, by the aid of such an example, would readily join in the virtuous and patriotic indignation, which a behaviour so repugnant to their national feelings and beneficial prejudices tends naturally to excite, and they would no longer submit to be insulted with commendations of French principles, with the introduction of French epithets, or the imitation of French manners.

I must take the liberty of saying that it is in a great measure owing to our forbearance that the mischief has proceeded so far. We suffer the greatest insults to be offered, and the greatest injuries to be done us, and we seem to have no other care than to conceal our resentments, and to suppress those emotions, which, if properly indulged, would prevent a repetition of the insult, and a continuance of the injury. To what is this infatuated and destructive remissness to be attributed? Not to a want of discernment, for we perceive the ruinous tendency of the conduct I allude to—not to a want of feeling, for we deeply regret the past, and dread the future consequences of that conduct—not, I trust, to a want of spirit; I can never suspect my Countrymen

trymen of a deficiency in that respect, although, for a time, their spirit may seem to lie dormant, or to want a proper and useful direction—it is principally owing to a false and mistaken liberality, the spawn of the frivolous philosophy of the age, which renders us unwilling to impose the least restraint upon the language or actions of men, provided they shelter themselves under the forms of the Constitution. We have been in the constant habit of seeing an Opposition in this Country; and because we are sensible that, when well timed and properly conducted, it is capable of being highly beneficial, we foolishly suppress that just indignation which alone could restrain it within due bounds, when it is injurious in the greatest possible degree. It cannot be doubted that an Opposition may, by watching over, with suspicious vigilance, the conduct of Administration, render essential service to the State. But when it is employed in systematically thwarting, opposing, and (if possible) defeating every measure of the Executive Power, however salutary, wise, or necessary such measure may be, it must, even in ordinary times, be mischievous, in proportion to its weight and influence. When so conducted, it is not only a great evil, but an evil which the Constitution has not foreseen, and for which, therefore, no remedy has been provided, as in the case of other evils incident to a Free State. But at a juncture

juncture like the present, such an Opposition, particularly when carried on, as we now see it, with an activity and malignity proportioned to the difficulties and dangers we have to encounter, tends to consequences the most fatal, and is therefore a crime of the first magnitude. Surely it is high time to lay aside that squeamish, ill-judged, and pernicious moderation, which operates as an encouragement to such conduct, and which, if persisted in, will make us accessory to our own ruin.

When we should all unite, as one man, for the salvation of the State, ought we to observe any ceremony, or keep any terms with those, who not only refuse to accede to such an union, but who do all in their power to promote dissention, and to frustrate every effort made for our preservation? If such persons be indifferent to the motives, which a regard for the public safety ought to inspire, it is our duty to check them by other motives, which may operate more powerfully. We should convince them that disgrace and infamy, the utter contempt of all good men, and the general detestation of the Country, will be sure to attend their continuance in such a line of conduct. Shame will often operate by way of restraint, when every nobler motive has lost its influence.

I have not the least personal animosity towards any individual of that Party of which I

have expressed myself so freely, and I hold the private virtues of many who belong to it in the greatest respect. But I cannot help considering its public conduct as mischievous, desperate and wicked, in the highest degree. At times, indeed, I feel myself disposed, in a spirit of charity, rather to suppose it under the influence of mad and ungovernable ambition, of the furious spirit of rivalry, and of the animosity occasioned by long, virulent, and unsuccessful contention, than of depravity of heart and corruption of principle. Unfortunately, whatever may be the cause, the consequences are equally fatal. In a former letter I suppressed censure, much as it was due, that I might with more effect tender to this Party an invitation to union—an invitation in which the public was ready to join. That invitation has not been accepted, nor does it seem likely to be accepted. And it now becomes an act of necessity and of duty, to rouse the public spirit and indignation against the desperate violence, with which these gentlemen seem determined to persist in their opposition to the measures of Government, and to the general sense of the Country*. Thrice happy should

* By the Sense of the Country I shall not be supposed to mean either the inconsiderate clamours of the rabble, who are always ready to enlist in the cause of violence, and to whom, therefore, a violent Party is always eager to appeal; or the vociferation of the Members of Seditious Clubs, who, in order to promote their republican schemes, crowd to COMMON HALLS and other tumultuous Assemblies---but the calm and deliberate voice of
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should I be if I could impress any of them with a sense of the egregious folly of a conduct, which tends to involve in misery and ruin the Community, to which their lives and fortunes are attached.

But to conclude this letter, which has been much delayed by a severe indisposition. Unless it be a part of the comprehensive scheme of Providence, for the sake of the future and lasting benefit of mankind, to make a compleat example, at the expence of the present race of men, of the effects of that spirit of infidelity, licentiousness and contempt of all authority, human and divine, which has been inculcated by the insidious systems of Modern Philosophy, and which has been long gaining 'ground in Society—Unless, I say, a sentence so dreadful has been passed upon us by the Righteous Disposer of all things, there seems to be abundant reason to conclude that our Destiny is in our own hands. If we improve, in the most beneficial manner, the immense advantages we still possess—if we properly avail ourselves of our strength, spirit, and resources, and particularly of our *individual wealth*, and of that *powerful Ally*, whose fidelity no disaster has been able to shake, the value of whose services has been beyond calculation, but who may not long be able, without the

that part of the Community, properly called the People, who, sensible that they have *property*, as well as other interests to preserve, are determined to reject those systems, and to resist those attempts, which, were they to prevail, would immediately subject all property to Depredation.

continuance of our pecuniary aid, to engage those immense armies, or rather hordes of barbarians, which would otherwise be seeking to pour themselves upon our Coasts—if, with respect and confidence, we rally round that lawful Government, which is Constitutionally entrusted with our defence, and, by affording it all the support in our power, strengthen its hands against both foreign and domestic enemies—And if, by a general display of a just and virtuous indignation, we check, discountenance, and keep under that desperate Party which, more than any thing else, enervates our spirit, relaxes our energy, and invalidates our efforts—Then may we hope, on rational grounds, that the result will be honourable, prosperous and happy—But if we fail in *any* of these respects, the consequences may be dreadful beyond the power of language to describe, and we may soon have reason to say, It had been better for us that we had never been born.

I am, &c.

MARCH 4, 1797.

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTE.

I have just met with a Speech, pronounced in the Council of 500, which is so apposite to many of the preceding observations, and particularly to those contained in page 78, that I cannot refrain from subjoining an extract.-----Doulcet thus reasons on the late suspension of payments in *specie* at the Bank: “A memorable event has been just announced. The English Bank has discontinued its payments. *Let us facilitate to the Members of the Courageous Opposition the means to improve this event, and to force Pitt to make Peace. Let us show ourselves worthy of their friendship.* But let us be careful not to show ourselves disposed to spread disorder and confusion, and to employ every Revolutionary Measure, in order to throw into the Country the Torches of Civil War.”

